DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 743 PS 017 399

AUTHOR Glezer, Helen
TITLE Maternity Leave in Australia: Employee and Employer Experiences. Report of a Survey. Australian Institute of Family Studies Monograph No. 7.
INSTITUTION Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne (Australia).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-642-13249-6
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 179p.; Photographs, shaded graphs, and questionnaires may not reproduce clearly.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Institute of Family Studies, 300 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000, Australia.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Statistical Data (110) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Employee Attitudes; *Employer Attitudes; Foreign Countries; *Fringe Benefits; *Government Employees; Mothers; National Surveys; *Program Improvement; Questionnaires
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; *Maternity Benefits; Private Sector; Public Sector

ABSTRACT

A study was made to obtain a broad overview of the operation of maternity leave in Australia from the perspectives of employees and employers. The study included: (1) an employee survey exploring the use and non-use of maternity leave and identifying determinants of taking maternity leave and of retaining women in the labor force after childbirth; (2) a private sector employer survey investigating the taking of maternity leave in different industries and businesses of various sizes, and identifying advantages and disadvantages of maternity leave for private sector employers; and (3) a smaller study of use of maternity leave in the public sector. A total of 2012 Australian women who had given birth during the last week of May, 1984 were surveyed 18 months after the birth. Of these women, 921 were employed during their pregnancy. Numerous findings are discussed. Although maternity leave was found to be common in the public sector, it was used by a minority in the private sector and was a rarity in organizations with less than 100 employees. Several issues regarding the adequacy of maternity leave provisions in Australia were identified. These issues warrant consideration from government, unions, and employers. Thirty-seven tables and 12 figures, as well as several black and white photographs are included, and attitude scales and questionnaires are appended. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED295743

Maternity Leave in Australia

Employee and Employer Experiences

Report of a survey

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PS C-18999

aifs

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Institute of Family Studies

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Maternity Leave in Australia

Employee and Employer Experiences
Report of a survey

Helen Glezer
AIFS Research Fellow

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Australian Institute of Family Studies
Monograph No. 7

3

The survey reported in this AIFS Monograph was undertaken with financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government through the Women's Bureau of the Department of Employment, Education and Training, and copyright rests with the Commonwealth. The views expressed in the report are not attributable to the Australian Government, the Department, the Women's Bureau or the WREIP Committee. The Australian Institute of Family Studies is pleased to present this analysis by AIFS Research Fellow, Helen Glezer, as a contribution to public information and debate on maternity leave provisions in Australia.

© Commonwealth of Australia — Australian Institute of Family Studies 1988

All rights reserved
No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Australian Institute of Family Studies
300 Queen Street
Melbourne 3000 Australia

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication
Glezer, Helen.
Maternity leave in Australia.

Bibliography.

ISBN 0 642 13249 6.

1. Maternity leave — Australia. I. Australian Institute of Family Studies. II. Title. (Series: Australian Institute of Family Studies monograph; no. 7).

331.4'25763'0994

Typeset by Bookset, Melbourne
Printed by Impact Printing, Melbourne
Photographs Don Whyte, Melbourne
Design Double Jay Graphics, Melbourne

The Maternity Leave Study was commissioned by the Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program (WREIP), administered by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Employment, Education and Training (formerly Department of Employment and Industrial Relations) and conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Acknowledgements

The Australian Institute of Family Studies would like most importantly to acknowledge and thank all respondents in these three surveys for making this study possible.

The Institute is grateful to the following: the Steering Committee members who provided invaluable guidance and input into the design and questionnaire construction stages of this research project; the Australian Bureau of Statistics who provided assistance in the design phase of this study, the questionnaire construction and the sampling frame for the employer survey; and the Department of Social Security who provided the sample for the employee survey and assisted by mailing the questionnaires.

We thank them all.

List of Contributors

Within the Australian Institute of Family Studies the following staff were involved in this project.

Research Design and Development
Helen Glezer (Project Director), Don Edgar (AIFS Director), Peter McDonald (AIFS Deputy Director, Research), and Andrew Prolisko (Computing)

Data Analysis
Helen Glezer

Research Assistance and Computer Programming
Sandra Marsden, Andrew Prolisko, Simon Freidin, and Rita Calafiore

Editing
Mari Davis and Sandra Marsden

The following AIFS staff gave comments and advice during the compilation of this report: Paul Amato, David Keane, Frank Maas, Ilene Wolcott, and Maryann Wulff.

CONTENTS

List of Tables viii
List of Figures x
List of Acronyms x
Foreword by Don Edgar xi

MATERNITY LEAVE IN AUSTRALIA — A SUMMARY 3

Maternity Leave from the Employees' Perspective 4
Maternity Leave from the Employers' Perspective 7
Issues for Consideration 10

PART 1: EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES OF MATERNITY LEAVE 13

Introduction 15

1 **Design and Procedure of Employee Survey 18**
Research Problems 18
The Sample and Response Rate 20
Evaluation of Sample 21

2 **Employee Experience of Maternity Leave 23**
Use and Non-use of Maternity Leave 23
Characteristics of Maternity Leave Taking 25
Commitment to Workforce Participation 31
Determinants and Antecedents of Maternity Leave Taking 35
Paternity Leave 39

3 **Maternity Leave Use and Return to Work in the Private Sector 41**
Comparison of Public and Private Sector 41
Influences on Maternity Leave Use 44
Employer Reaction to Pregnancy 49

Employee Experience of Maternity Leave 51
Return to Work After Maternity Leave 51
Reasons for Returning or Not Returning to Work 53

4 Overview of Maternity Leave in the Public Sector 56
Maternity Leave Conditions 57
Occupational Structure of Respondents 58
Retention in the Workforce After Maternity Leave 60
Reasons for Returning or Not Returning to Work 63
Maternity Leave in the Teaching and Nursing Professions 65

5 Determinants of Return to Employment 69
Workforce Participation Before and After the First Child 70
Changes in Household Income Before and After the First Child 72
Influences on Return to Work 74
Type and Costs of Child Care on Return to Work 77

6 Maternity Leave Experience of Sole Parents and Those in De Facto Relationships 81
Demographic Characteristics 81
Employment Status Before and After the Birth 82
Partner Characteristics 83

7 Current and Preferred Employment Status of Women 84

8 Employees' Views of Maternity leave 89
Special Circumstances in Pregnancy 91

PART 2: EMPLOYER SURVEY — THE PRIVATE SECTOR 93

9 Design and Procedure of Employer Survey 95
Procedure 96
Sampling 96
Evaluation of Sample 100
Response Rate 100

10 Which Organizations Experience Maternity Leave? 102
How Maternity Leave Operated in Establishments Which Experienced It 104
Operation of Maternity Leave Over One Calendar Year 109

11 Factors Which Influence Maternity Leave Experience 113
Female Casual Labour 113
Proportion of Female Employees 114

12 Maternity Leave Experience in Specific Business Sizes 116
In Small-To-Medium Size Establishments 116
In Medium-To-Large Establishments 119
In Large Establishments 122

13 Views of Private Employers on the Working of Maternity Leave 125
Advantages For Employers 125
Disadvantages For Employers 127
General Comments on Maternity Leave Provisions 128

PART 3: EMPLOYER SURVEY — THE PUBLIC SECTOR 133

14 Design and Procedure of Public Sector Employer Survey 135
Survey Process 135
Response Rate 136

15 Review of Maternity Leave Operation in the Public Sector 137
Take-up of Maternity Leave 137
Public Sector Experience of Maternity Leave 138
Return to Work 139

References 141

Appendices 143
Appendix 1: Attitude Scales 143
Appendix 2: Questionnaires 145

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Comparison of maternity leave respondents with the sampling frame provided by the DSS Family Allowance List

Table 2: Comparison of women in employment (in scope) during pregnancy with women not in workforce (not in scope) during pregnancy

Table 3: Utilization and non-utilization of maternity leave

Table 4: Determinants and antecedents of maternity leave: multiple regression analysis

Table 5: Type of leave and length of time taken by fathers at the time of the birth

Table 6: Comparison of public and private sector employment during pregnancy, 1983-84

Table 7: Private sector by maternity leave status

Table 8: Knowledge of maternity leave provisions among women eligible for maternity leave in the private sector

Table 9: Reasons for not taking maternity leave among employees who qualified for maternity leave in the private sector

Table 10: Employer reaction to pregnancy reported by women eligible for maternity leave in the private sector

Table 11: Return to work after the birth in the private sector

Table 12: Main reasons for returning to work: women in the private sector

Table 13: Reasons for not returning to work: women in the private sector

Table 14: Use of maternity leave in Commonwealth and State governments

Table 15: Use of maternity leave and retention in the workforce of State public sector women: by maternity leave provision groups

Table 16: Industry, occupational classification and educational levels: respondents in federal and State government employment

Table 17: Retention rates among maternity leave takers in the public sector by occupational status

Table 18: Maternity leave in all public sectors (maternity leave takers only)

Table 19: Public sector teachers: working hours per week prior to and after the birth

Table 20: Changes in household income before and after the birth of the first child

Table 21: Determinants of returning to employment after the first birth among married women: multiple regression analysis

Table 22: Child care used on return to workforce after first birth

Table 23: Characteristics of respondents who were never married, separated, divorced, widowed or living in de facto relationships at the time of the birth

Table 24: ABS sampling frame for industries: by business size

Table 25: Industry responses in each cell and percentage of sample in each cell: by business size

Table 26: Maternity leave experience of establishments: by business size

Table 27: Maternity leave experience of establishments: by industry sector

Table 28: Problems experienced with maternity leave: by business size

Table 29: How establishments cover vacancies caused by maternity leave: by business size

Table 30: Benefits experienced from maternity leave: by business size

Table 31: Percentage of total workforce taking maternity leave in 1985: by industry and business size

Table 32: Mean rate of return from maternity leave: by industry and business size

Table 33: Examples of maternity leave experience in selected establishments

Table 34: Use of casual female labour: by industry sector

Table 35: Percentage of establishments with more than fifty per cent female employees: by industry sector

Table 36: Experience of maternity leave: by business type and size

Table 37: Response rate in the public sector survey of establishments

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Maternity leave take-up by employment sector

Figure 2: Exit and return to the workforce: private sector employees

Figure 3: Exit and return to the workforce: public sector employees

Figure 4: Maternity leave use by year commenced with employer: private sector employees

Figure 5: Maternity leave use by year commenced with employer: public sector employees

Figure 6: Number of children of all women in the sample

Figure 7: Workforce participation during pregnancy by number of children

Figure 8: Exit and return to employment by number of children

Figure 9: Exit and return to employment by occupational status

Figure 10: Hours worked during and after pregnancy

Figure 11: Preferred employment arrangements by workforce participation

Figure 12: Experience of maternity leave by business size and industry

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
CAI	Confederation of Australian Industry
DEIR	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (now Department of Employment, Education and Training)
DSS	Department of Social Security
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EDC	Expected Date of Confinement
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRIS	Integrated Register Information System
ML	Maternity Leave
SEE	Survey of Employment and Earnings
WREIP	Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program

FOREWORD — MATERNITY LEAVE REPORT

Public discussion about maternity leave often confuses several related issues. This report of a study of over 2,000 women who gave birth to a child in May 1984 may help to clarify the debate.

For a start, the study suggests that 'the debate' itself suffers from insufficient first-hand experience. Only 35 per cent of all private business organizations have ever experienced female employees taking maternity leave. For the others it has no impact at all. Those who have had cases of maternity leave are, on the whole, large organizations which (like the public sector) are highly bureaucratized and highly unionized, so knowledge and acceptance of the system are more widespread.

We found that 78 per cent of all maternity leave is taken in the public sector, only 21 per cent in the private sector. The level of ignorance about maternity leave rights and regulations is marked, on the part of many employers as well as their female workers. In a nation where most industrial awards include maternity leave provisions this is an indictment of both union and management information systems. The central task seems to be to ensure that all women employees are given full access to such a resource. Information is the most basic element of equal access. There is a major task ahead in helping people think through the issues and set maternity leave in its wider context.

In the Institute's view, maternity leave and paternity leave should be kept separate from the broader issue of parental or family leave.

Maternity leave relates specifically to the birth of a child. It is primarily a health issue in that the mother and child must be protected from harm in the pre- and post-birth period. Paternity leave is, in similar vein, more a matter of health support and compassionate benefits than an unarguable industrial 'right'. This study shows that though paternity leave is generally not available, 60 per cent of fathers took some time off at the time of birth. So the International Labour Organization (Convention 103) view that 5 days' paternity leave should be available is probably pragmatic as well as compas-

sionate, in that some male working days will be lost at the time of birth in any case.

Maternity leave becomes an industrial issue in that, while absent from work on maternity leave, a woman should also be protected from dismissal and her seniority rights and her right to reinstatement in her former or equivalent work should be preserved if she so desires. Having a child is of benefit to the whole society so the mother alone should not suffer further disadvantage from her confinement. ILO Convention 103 holds that employed women, as a right, should be entitled to at least twelve weeks' maternity leave, including a compulsory period of leave before and after the confinement. The length of time for preservation of rights is a matter for negotiation, but the ILO Convention's minimum of twelve weeks at least covers the post-confinement recovery period and early infancy. As this study shows, women in Australia have very unequal rights, though most awards include some form of maternity leave. Public sector employees are much beter off than private sector employees. And some public sector women are much better off than others — for example, teachers in Victoria are able to take up to seven years' maternity leave and still return to the service; the Commonwealth Public Service provides for a period of paid maternity leave, whereas some State equivalents do not.

Some of these provisions may well (as is often argued) block access to permanent jobs for younger people, may result in de-skilling over such a long period of time, and may cause smaller employers some replacement difficulties. Since a quarter of women do not return after taking maternity leave, there may even be a case for employers to be notified of a firm return date once some initial period of leave has elapsed, so that a suitable replacement can be found if necessary. However, we should not confuse arguments about the length of leave, or whether it should be paid leave, with the more basic issues of health and job security for all women giving birth. The key issue seems to be the inequitable availability of maternity leave for different groups of female workers.

In our view, there is no immutable logic in the argument that, because one group of workers has an employer-provided benefit of a particular kind, all other workers should have that same benefit. Public employment offers certain benefits to those who choose to work in public employment, as well as work conditions that others would see as undesirable. It is an arrangement between the employer and employee in the same way as are salaries and 'executive packages'. Doubtless, the Commonwealth benefits from its provision of paid maternity leave through its enhanced capacity to attract and hold better employees than might otherwise be the case. So paid maternity leave should probably remain a matter for negotiation between employers and employees rather than becoming a universal 'right', whereas the right to take leave and retain some job security should be universal on more general grounds of health and social justice.

In any event, the question of who should pay for paid maternity leave raises further equity questions. Since the demise of the Maternity Allow-

ance there is no universal payment made to mothers at the time of birth in Australia. Paid maternity leave is only available to some sections of the public sector, and though some low income women can get special benefits prior to and following the birth, the majority of women workers lose their source of income during this period. Other countries use a variety of insurance measures to cover income maintenance during maternity leave, but we need to think carefully about who pays. Contributions by the worker imply rational planning of pregnancy and choice on the part of the individual. Employer payment assumes return to the same place of work. Government-provided national insurance may avoid discrepancies but raises the question of equity in relation to women who are not working but also give birth. If we follow the ILO Convention, the argument is that children are a national asset and the State should contribute at this time of increased cost and workforce disruption. A further issue not often enough discussed is that of portability of benefits. In this study women giving birth had been continuously employed in the private sector for an average of 5 years, in the public sector for 7 years, so they are not capricious workers.

Children impose an extra cost burden on all families, so perhaps we should be insisting on a return to universal family allowance or even a child birth payment to cushion the cost impact of a new child. Equity for all women on basic rights needs to be won before extra benefits are given to those already in a better position than others.

The distinctions between full-time and part-time work, between permanent and casual workers, impose additional complexities on the maternity leave debate. There remains a stubborn resistance to the fact that most women with children would prefer to have part-time rather than full-time employment, that they want to be able to combine family work with paid work, caring for children with another career. Ostensibly, opposition to 'casual' or part-time work is based on the obvious exploitation of casual workers, particularly women. But lying not too deeply behind it is a rejection of motherhood as such and the odd view that only full-time work can be the salvation of women from inequality and male exploitation.

We agree totally with the *description* of what is happening at present. Women (and men) are exploited in part-time work, they are disadvantaged by having less career continuity, lower salaries, fewer rights and worse conditions. But we do not agree with the *solutions* being put up. Full-time work is a desirable equity goal when it is monopolized by men to the disadvantage of women, as it is at present. Full-time work is, in any event, a socially constructed thing, having changed from over 60 hours per week, to 48, to 40, to its present definition of 35 or more hours per week. Though it is doubtless an unrealistic suggestion given present attitudes, we would be able to resolve some of the problems of employed parents with their dual family and job responsibilities by declaring 25 hours per week to be 'full time'. At least then both men and women could better handle childcare, housework and shopping arrangements. But it would not solve the more central problem that it is women who will more likely return to, or move

into, part-time/casual work after a birth, and therefore suffer the disadvantage of career discontinuity and loss of benefits.

Surely then, the solution lies in more radical change to the structure of work in society than is being proposed. Certainly, given the present structural problems of unemployment, technological change and the likelihood that 'full-time' work for all is an impossibility, we need more flexible and imaginative work arrangements.

This raises two issues that are broader than maternity leave itself, but which should be part of this debate. One is the extension of adequate benefits to casual workers. The other is the restructuring of all work arrangements so that both men and women can more easily and productively manage their dual roles of parent and paid worker.

The study reported on here shows that 65 per cent of the women who had been in employment during their pregnancy returned to paid employment within 18 months. For those who took maternity leave, the return rate was 73 per cent. The majority gave financial reasons for their return rather than the intrinsic 'enjoyment' of their work, though we know that social contact is a major motivator and source of satisfaction. Three quarters of all these women said they would prefer part-time rather than full-time work and most, in fact, were employed part-time. Of this sample, only 44 per cent had taken maternity leave, 32 per cent were eligible but did not take it and the remaining 24 per cent employed during pregnancy were not eligible at all.

So surely one solution lies in extending maternity leave eligibility to casual workers, to protect their health and that of the child, and to preserve their continuity in the workforce. Another solution is to permit, as is done in some parts of the public sector, a part-time return to work at the completion of the maternity leave period, with the possibility of reinstatement to full-time work at a specified time. Overall, however, the major task is to fight for permanent part-time work with pro-rated benefits as a normal and desirable state for both men and women. Reduced hours have been a traditional solution to unemployment. If we had wider availability of permanent part-time jobs, we would have fewer unemployed, and fewer on 'the dole'. All we lack is a sufficiently imaginative and flexible management and union structure for such a system to operate to the benefit of all families. Continuity, preservation of skills and experience, inter-changeability of workers, job-sharing by husbands, wives, workmates would be major advantages compared with a labour market bogged down in outmoded practices.

Which brings me to the second related issue. This is that even with improvements to maternity or paternity leave policies in place, the broader issue of on-going family and parental responsibilities still needs to be addressed. Childbirth confinement is only a temporary 'disability'. Caring for a developing child is not. Nor does a person's caring responsibility stop once a child goes to school, or even leaves home to live independently. Their problems have a nasty habit of returning to the front door. With an ageing population, care for the aged is becoming a greater burden, and this form of 'family responsibility' will impact upon workforce participation

and productivity as much as child care in the coming years.

So in our view, longer periods out of the workplace as a solution to family responsibilities for either the father or the mother, are not the right answer. Rather we need to look for innovative policies *within* the workplace that respond to the needs of all workers with family responsibilities. This is the thrust of ILO Convention 156 which calls for national policies framed to enable individuals to engage in employment without being subject to discrimination and without conflict between employment and their family responsibilities.

As this Institute has often pointed out, an employer need be merely pragmatic, not idealistic, to provide work conditions and benefits that reduce absenteeism and improve morale and productivity. The Australian government's call for greater productivity and technological innovation can only be achieved if government, employers, and trade unions recognize that people will (stubbornly and persistently) put family first. Lack of adequate child care, inflexible work schedules and shopping hours, rigid full-time conditions and lack of pro-rated benefits for part-time work, make it difficult for every employee to cope effectively with the demands of personal family lives.

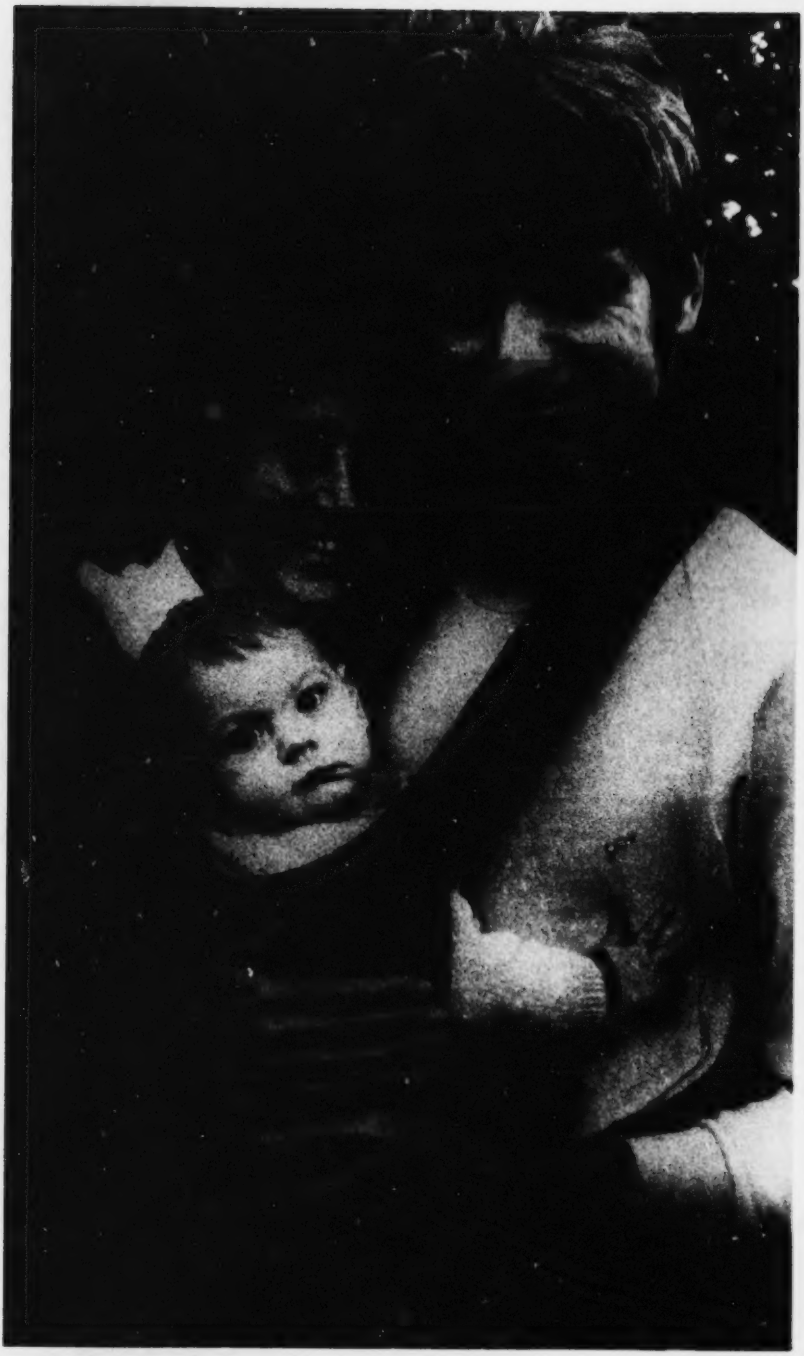
One of the slogans this Institute has used to encourage a new approach to family policies is that 'Every individual has a family'. Another is that 'The family does not stop at the front door'. This survey of maternity leave is a timely reminder of the aptness of both.

The study indicates how lax many union officials and small employers have been in making female workers aware of their existing rights under awards to maternity leave; the need for better information is great. It indicates that women value and want to spend time with their newborn children and want part-time work to keep up both income levels and social contacts. No amount of deploring such 'unenlightened' values will wish them away. Nor will a piecemeal approach to workplace restructuring properly meet the needs of women. Maternity and paternity leave are in fact very limited, though essential, aspects of the wider need for work arrangements that better cater for the new realities of family life, which include not just marriage and children but also singlehood, partnerships outside marriage, and the demands of caring for older and disabled family members.

Don Edgar,
Director.

March, 1988

SUMMARY



MATERNITY LEAVE IN AUSTRALIA — A SUMMARY

Maternity leave benefits have been widely available to Australian female employees since 1979. Ninety-four per cent of female wage and salary earners in Australia work under federal and State awards that provide up to 52 weeks unpaid maternity leave. Some areas of the public sector provide paid maternity leave, usually twelve weeks.

In order to be eligible for maternity leave, employees must have not less than 12 months' continuous service with their employer, and must be full-time or part-time employees, not casual or seasonal workers.

Historically the main impetus for maternity leave benefits related to concern for the health and safety of the mother and child. However, in more recent times as the participation in the labour force of women with children has increased, there has been a shift in emphasis in the objectives of maternity leave legislation to protect and enhance the employment opportunities of women with children.

The Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program (WREIP) commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies to undertake a study of how maternity leave is operating in Australia. This project was funded by the Women's Bureau (Department of Employment and Industrial Relations).

The purpose of the study was to obtain a broad overview of the operation of maternity leave in Australia from the employee and employer perspective.

Three surveys were conducted:

a) A survey of maternity leave from the employee perspective. The main objective of this survey was to look at the utilization and non-utilization of maternity leave and identify the determinants of taking maternity leave and the determinants of retaining women in the labour force after childbirth.

b) A survey of maternity leave from the private sector employers' perspective. The main objective of this survey was to look at the take-up of maternity leave in different industries and business sizes and identify the advantages and disadvantages of maternity leave for private sector employers.

c) A smaller study of the operation of maternity leave in the public sector was also conducted. The main objective of this was to look at maternity leave usage in the public sector and to contrast private and public sector maternity leave operation.

Maternity Leave from the Employees' Perspective

In order to study maternity leave in Australia from the employees' perspective, all women who gave birth to a child in one week in May 1984 were surveyed eighteen months after the birth. The response rate for this survey was 50 per cent.

Out of a sample of 2012 respondents, 921 (46%) were in employment during their pregnancy. Thirty-seven per cent of those in employment had taken maternity leave once, 10 per cent twice and one per cent three times.

Utilization and Non-Utilization of Maternity Leave

In addressing the main research question of this survey, the use and non-use of maternity leave by employees, it was necessary to determine whether employees were eligible for maternity leave or not. Also it was necessary to distinguish between women who formally took maternity leave and those who returned to the workforce but had not officially taken maternity leave.

It was found that 44 per cent of women took maternity leave, 32 per cent were eligible for maternity leave but did not take it and the remaining 24 per cent employed during pregnancy were ineligible for maternity leave. In other words, one in four women were not eligible for maternity leave and one third though eligible did not take it. (see Figure 1)

Differences in Maternity Leave Use in the Public and Private Sectors

There are differing maternity leave conditions available for public and private sector employees. In the public sector, 76 per cent of employees take maternity leave, compared to 21 per cent in the private sector. In the private sector almost half of the employees eligible for maternity leave do not take it. Half these same women had no information about maternity leave. However, it must also be noted that half the women who did not take up the maternity leave option wanted to give up work. A third of the women employed in the private sector were ineligible for maternity leave.

In general it was found that women who were eligible for maternity leave had been employed with their employer for a considerable length of time prior to the birth. For example the median number of years for public sector women was around seven years, compared to five years among private

sector women. This is probably a reflection of the recent demographic trend of delaying the first birth, which results in women spending more years in employment prior to having children, thus increasing their skill level.

Determinants of Taking Maternity Leave

Among those eligible to take maternity leave, a statistical analysis showed that the following factors in order of importance were significant in determining whether women took maternity leave:

- being employed in the public sector
- having information about maternity leave
- staying in the workforce until just before the expected due date of confinement thus demonstrating attachment to the workforce
- having work–family values which see work and childrearing as complementary
- being a member of a trade union
- having a high education
- being employed in a large establishment.

Employees in the public sector tend to possess those characteristics most favourable to the taking of maternity leave. For example, high education, strong attachment to the labour force, membership of unions and being employed by large organizations are all characteristics of occupations employing large numbers of women in the public sector, such as teaching and nursing.

By contrast there are proportionally fewer employees with those characteristics in occupations in the private sector. The employee who does not take maternity leave is likely to be employed in the private sector. The establishment where she is employed is likely to be small–medium size. She is unlikely to be a member of a trade union and has never heard of maternity leave. Possibly she left work prior to six weeks before the birth. She is unlikely to have received any tertiary education. She is also very ambivalent about working when she has pre-school children.

Having no information about maternity leave is significantly related to being employed in the private sector, working in smaller establishments and in particular industries. These women tended to have lower education, lower status jobs and lower household incomes.

Retention Rates After Childbirth

The retention rate after taking formal maternity leave in the private and public sectors is the same: 73 per cent of women return to work within 18 months of the birth. Also a substantial number of women who did not take formal maternity leave return to the workforce. Amongst those who were eligible but did not take it, 66 per cent in the public sector and 42 per cent in the private sector returned to work. Rates are even higher for women who were ineligible for maternity leave; 77 per cent in the public sector and 54 per cent in the private sector returned to work.

Determinants of Return to Work After a First Birth

The major exit from the labour force by women occurs after the first birth. An examination was made of the determinants of retention in the workforce after the first birth. The women most likely to return to the workforce within eighteen months are:

- those with high status occupations (managerial, professional and para-professional)
- those with high earning potential
- those whose husbands earn a low income
- those who worked up until just before the birth
- those who have been with the same employer for a long period
- those who do not see child care as detrimental to young children.

In other words, women who return to the labour force after the first birth are more likely to have high earning potential and a high status managerial, professional or para-professional occupation. They stay in the workforce until late in the pregnancy, indicating a strong work commitment. They have been employed with the same employer for quite some time, the average being five years. Values concerning work and child care suggest willingness to combine workforce participation and childrearing. Moreover, child care is not seen as detrimental to children. In addition, workforce participation may well be out of economic necessity because there is evidence that, after allowing for other characteristics, women whose husbands have low incomes are more likely to return to the labour force.

Women who do not return to the labour force after the first birth are more likely to have lower status occupations, and consequently lower earning potential. They are likely to have dropped out of the workforce earlier in the pregnancy, and to have not been employed by the same employer for a great length of time. In other words they are less attached to the workforce. They are likely to have strong negative views about child care and mothers of preschoolers being in the workforce. In addition, after allowing for other characteristics, those whose husbands have relatively higher incomes are less likely to return.

Reasons For and Against Return to Work

Sixty per cent of women employed during pregnancy returned to the workforce. The main reasons stated by women for returning to the workforce after the birth of a child are financial. Irrespective of the level of their family income, they return because they 'need the money'. Fifty-six per cent gave this reason in the private sector, and 47 per cent in the public sector. The next most common response was that they enjoy working (17%).

Forty per cent of women employed during pregnancy did not return to the workforce. The main reasons given for not returning to work after the birth are concerned with values about work and childrearing. Seven out of ten women who did not return never intended working while their children

were young, half didn't return to work because of breastfeeding, and a third stated their partner preferred them not to work. One in four said there was no economic need for them to be working at this stage of their lives.

Apart from the above reasons, 20 per cent of women said they were concerned about the cost of child care and the problem of finding suitable child care. The issue of child care was raised in the survey and results indicate that women pay a high proportion of their income on child care (on average 25 per cent). For many women their concerns over the adequacy and availability of child care were impediments to their continuation in the labour force after childbirth.

Work Schedules Before and After Birth

Sixty-two per cent of women were employed full-time (35 hours or more) during pregnancy, 18 per cent were employed 20–34 hours, and 20 per cent 1–19 hours. After the birth, amongst those who return to the labour force, 36 per cent returned to full time work, 21 per cent were working 20–34 hours and 43 per cent were employed 1–19 hours.

An important factor preventing women re-entering the workforce is the lack of suitable work arrangements. There is a preference for part-time work amongst women with a pre-school child. Around three-quarters of women in employment after the birth, either part-time or full-time, state that they would prefer to work part-time. It must be borne in mind that this is an expressed preference and if it were available they may or may not take it. If one looks at women who are not in the workforce, 47 per cent prefer their current status of not working, but 49 per cent of them would prefer to have part-time jobs. If those preferring full-time work are included, more than 50 per cent of women not working could be regarded as 'discouraged' workers due to lack of jobs with suitable working hours.

These results provide evidence for the need for part-time work for women during the childbearing years, and suggest that greater availability of part-time work would lead to greater retention of women in the labour force after childbirth.

Maternity Leave from the Employers' Perspective

Two surveys of employers were conducted. A major survey of the private sector and a minor study of public sector employers. Overall, the employer surveys demonstrate that maternity leave is a minor problem for organizations.

The Private Sector

A survey of private sector employers was conducted looking at 1252 establishments in five different business sizes and 11 industry sectors. The aim of this survey was to examine how maternity leave operates from the employer perspective. Only 35 per cent of the total sample had ever experienced an employee taking maternity leave.

The experience of maternity leave in establishments by business size and industry sector is shown in Figure 12 on page 121.

Under 100 Employees. Only 16 per cent of establishments in this small–medium size had ever experienced an employee taking maternity leave. The industry sectors most likely to have experienced maternity leave are the community service industry (this includes education and health), manufacturing and finance.

100–499 Employees. Sixty-six per cent of establishments in this category had experienced employees taking maternity leave. The community service industry has most experience, followed by wholesale and retail trade.

500+ Employees. Ninety-three per cent of large establishments had experience of maternity leave.

These results illustrate the strong relationship between the experience of maternity leave and business size. Small business in Australia has very low experience of maternity leave. Obviously the larger the establishment the more likely it is to experience maternity leave because of the higher number of females employed.

Among establishments which experienced employees taking maternity leave in the period 1st January, to 31st December, 1985, a crude estimate of the mean percentage of the total labour force taking maternity leave was 1.21 per cent; the mean percentage of just the female labour force was 1.8 per cent. Crude estimates of mean retention rates in the same time period were 70 per cent.

As one would expect, factors which influence the impact of maternity leave on organizations, whether public or private sector, are:

- the use of casual female labour which is ineligible for maternity leave. There are high rates of casual female employment in some industries such as the wholesale/retail trade and recreation and personal services industry, and where there are high rates of casual female employment maternity leave has less impact on the industry.
- the number of females employed in an industry. Maternity leave has a greater impact on industries which employ mostly females such as community services, recreation and personal services and the wholesale and retail trade. However these industries also have the highest rate of female casual labour and therefore do not experience maternity leave to the extent that their employee profile might suggest.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Maternity Leave

Employers were asked to voice their concerns about maternity leave and

what they saw as its advantages and disadvantages. For many there were no disadvantages, and maternity leave was not perceived as a problem. Employers see maternity leave as an advantage in that it enables them to retain skilled workers:

> 'Instead of women resigning to have children, they are returning to the workforce and we are retaining valuable expertise.'

Employers often feel it is only the employee who benefits from maternity leave provisions. Some employers voiced reservations that maternity leave benefits may be detrimental to the job prospects of women in the childbearing years.

The main disadvantages and problems employers face are:

- being uncertain about whether or not an employee will return from maternity leave.
- having to find and train a replacement for an uncertain time period.
- having employees failing to return after stating their intention to return.
- maternity leave being more difficult to deal with in small establishments.

Consistent with the employee survey many employers have experienced employees wanting to change to part-time work or more flexible working hours after maternity leave.

The lack of information about maternity leave provisions found in the employee survey is matched by a similar lack of information among private sector employers, particularly small businesses. Not only did small business have no information,but many had erroneous views of maternity leave, assuming they would have to pay their employees for the twelve month period.

The Public Sector

A more limited study of public sector employers was conducted looking at the operation of maternity leave mainly at the enterprise level. Information collected by the various public sector employers throughout Australia on maternity leave varies in quantity and quality. However, it was found that there is far greater experience of maternity leave in the public sector. In addition, retention rates vary between 50 and 75 per cent.

The Australian Public Service has noted a decline in the numbers taking maternity leave which is attributed to demographic changes in the general population such as a delaying of the first birth, a decline in the birth rate which is more pronounced amongst women in employment and the changing age distribution of the female labour force, which is brought about by women returning to or remaining in the labour force during their childbearing years.

Figures from one of the large statutory authorities indicate that at any given time 3.4 per cent of the total workforce is on long term leave, only 16 per cent being for maternity leave. In other words, maternity leave has a minor impact on total employment in the public sector. This finding illus-

trates that maternity leave should be evaluated in relation to other long-term leave.

Issues for Consideration

While maternity leave is a common occurrence in the public sector, it is used by a minority (21 per cent) in the private sector. There is a lack of knowledge among private sector employees about maternity leave entitlements. Although this partly accounts for its low usage, another significant factor is that many women want to interrupt their working lives while they have young children. However, half those who are not working would like some part-time attachment to the labour force at this stage of their lives, and over ninety per cent intend to return to the labour force in the future.

Results from the employer survey are consistent with the employee data. Maternity leave is a rare occurrence in organizations with less than 100 employees. This study of maternity leave has shown that maternity leave is not a major problem for employers and many women do not take maternity leave, particularly in the private sector. With greater information available on maternity leave there may be an increase in its take-up but this should not have a significant impact on organizations unless they have an imbalance in the age structure of their female labour force. This is perhaps an issue that employers should examine.

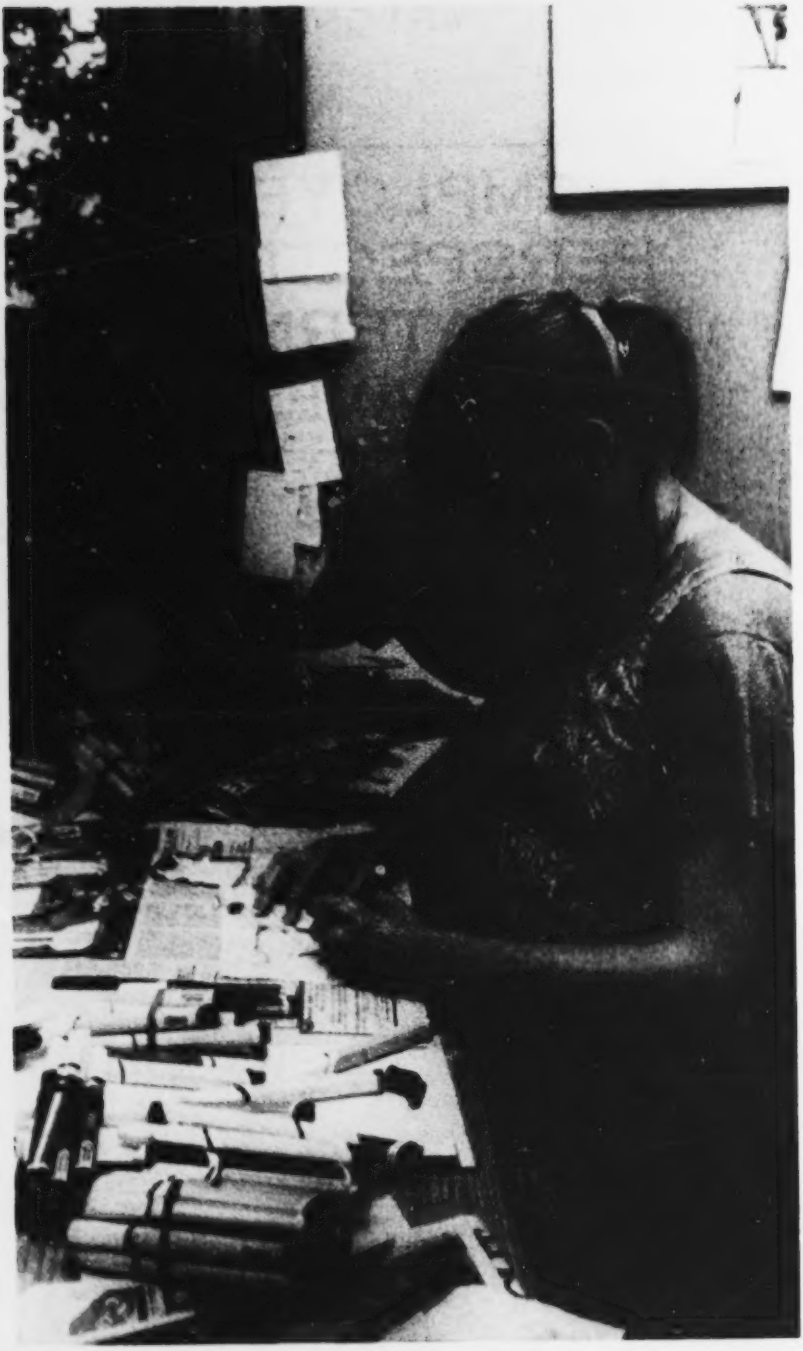
Several issues emerge regarding the adequacy of maternity leave provisions in Australia which warrant consideration from government, unions and employers. These are:

1. With 94 per cent of awards containing maternity leave provisions, it appears that Australia has near universal maternity leave coverage. However, this is not the case if one in four women workers are ineligible for maternity leave either because they are casual workers or have been employed insufficient time with their employer. Some employers admit that their recruiting patterns have changed since the introduction of maternity leave provisions and that they are using more casual labour. If this increase in the casual labour force continues, then provisions for maternity leave should be considered for casual workers.
2. The lack of information and misinformation about maternity leave provisions among private sector employees and employers no doubt contributes to the small usage of maternity leave in the private sector. These provisions have been in place since the late seventies and there is cause for concern that such a high level of ignorance exists. There is a need for an extensive information campaign by both government, unions and employers on this issue. This information needs to go beyond just informing women of their maternity leave rights. It needs to warn women of the implications of moving into part time casual employment because of their loss of rights to later maternity leave and other benefits such as superannuation and long service leave.

3. Since the demise of the Maternity Allowance there is no universal payment made to mothers at the time of birth in Australia. Paid maternity leave is only available in some sections of the public sector, which means that the majority of women workers who give birth and have to take the compulsory six weeks break at the time of the birth lose their source of income during this period. Other countries use various national insurance schemes, social insurance or unemployment insurance, to cover the cost of payment or part payment for this compulsory period. It would be unfair to burden employers with the sole responsibility of paid maternity leave, so there is a need for employers, unions and government to look at developing a system which would provide some payment to all women during this six week period.
4. An important factor preventing many women from re-entering the labour force is the lack of appropriate working arrangements, especially those relating to part-time work and to the availability of affordable child care. Results in this survey suggest a preference among these women for part-time work at this stage of the family life cycle and an intention to return to the labour force in the future. If there were appropriate working hours and suitable work conditions, there would be a potential labour force pool available. There is clearly a need for rethinking the place of part-time work in the family life cycle to ensure greater permanency with adjusted benefits and associated services which would help to alleviate problems associated with casual low-paid jobs among women workers.
5. Currently, one in four women fails to return to the job after taking formal maternity leave. If improved maternity leave coverage in the private sector is achieved, thus increasing the impact of maternity leave on employers, there may be justification for a requirement for women to notify a firm date of return three months after the birth. The major complaints of employers were the difficulty of finding replacements for women on maternity leave for unspecified times and being uncertain about when and whether an employee will return to work. Notification early in the leave period may help to alleviate these problems.

PART ONE

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES OF MATERNITY LEAVE



INTRODUCTION

Maternity leave benefits have been widely available to Australian female employees since 1979. Ninety-four per cent of female wage and salary earners in Australia work under Federal and State Awards that provide up to 52 weeks unpaid maternity leave.

The Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program (WREIP) commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies to undertake a study of how maternity leave is operating in Australia. This project was funded by the Women's Bureau (Department of Employment and Industrial Relations).

The purpose of the study was to obtain a broad overview of the operation of maternity leave in Australia from the employee and employer perspectives.

Three surveys were conducted:

a) A survey of maternity leave from the employee perspective. The main objective of this survey was to look at the use and non-use of maternity leave and to identify the determinants of taking maternity leave and the determinants of retaining women in the labour force after childbirth.

b) A survey of maternity leave from the private sector employers' perspective. The main objective of this survey was to look at the take up of maternity leave in different industries and business sizes and identify the advantages and disadvantages of maternity leave for private sector employers.

c) A smaller study of the operation of maternity leave in the public sector was also conducted. The main objective of this was to look at maternity leave usage in the public sector and to contrast private and public sector maternity leave operation.

Maternity leave is time absent from work allowed by employers for an employee to have a baby. It may begin before and continue after the birth of a child for a total of up to 52 weeks. Except in unusual circumstances, this includes a six week period of compulsory leave following childbirth. An employer may require the employee to commence maternity leave up to six

weeks before the expected date of confinement (EDC). Full-time and part-time employees are covered but casual and seasonal workers are not. If there is no provision in an award,or if a person does not work under an Award, there is no entitlement to maternity leave except at the time of the survey in New South Wales where all women working full-time or regular part-time are covered.

Maternity leave is sometimes called accouchment leave and part of what is generally called maternity leave can be called confinement leave.

For most workers in the private sector maternity leave provides an entitlement from six to 52 weeks unpaid, unbroken leave provided that they (1) provide the employer with a certificate from a qualified medical practitioner stating the expected date of confinement (EDC); and (2) have had not less than 12 months' continuous service with that employer.

Maternity leave provisions within the public sector are often more generous. Australian Public Service employees are entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave and additional unpaid leave to equal a total of 52 weeks.

In the State public services, conditions vary. In Victoria the public service provides 12 weeks of paid leave and up to 40 weeks unpaid leave. The entitlement for teachers in Victoria is up to seven years unpaid family leave. In the Northern Territory 12 weeks paid leave is granted and parental leave up to a child's sixth birthday.

Public servants in New South Wales are granted paid leave for six weeks before the EDC, and half pay for six weeks after the birth of the child and unpaid leave of 40 weeks. New South Wales regulations in the public service are unique in requiring employees to return to work for the equivalent of 62 days after leave before payment is received. In New South Wales employees can take maternity leave full time for twelve months, or part time for two years, at the discretion of the department employing them. In Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania generally there is no paid component to maternity leave. Tasmania allows teachers up to three years' nurturing leave.

Historically the main aim of maternity leave benefits was concern for the health and safety of the mother and child. However, in more recent times as the participation in the labour force of women with children has increased, there has been a shift in emphasis in the objectives of maternity leave legislation to protect and enhance the employment opportunities of women with children.

Provision of maternity leave has been the subject of international debate in which Australia has participated. In December 1975, Australia ratified with no reservations the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (1966). The covenant came into effect in January, 1976. Article 10 (2) of the Covenant states:

> Special protection should be accorded to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth. During such period working mothers should be accorded paid leave or leave with adequate social security benefits.

It was not until July 1983 that Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This Convention bids countries which ratify it to take appropriate legislative and other measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and to ensure equality of opportunity. (The Australian Government's *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 gives effect to certain provisions of this Convention). However, when ratifying the UN Convention, Australia entered a reservation to Article 11(2)(b) which obliges countries 'to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances'.

Legislation was first introduced for Maternity Leave in Australia for federal government public servants in the *Maternity Leave (Australian Government Employees) Act* 1973; this was amended by the *(Australian Government Employees) Amendment Act* 1978. However, for most Australian workers maternity leave was introduced in 1979–80 after the Decision of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission 1979, which covered six federal awards. The maternity leave clause which accompanied the decision was included subsequently in all federal awards upon application and is recognised now as the standard provision. Similar provisions were adopted in State awards.

The major differences between conditions for women in the workforce are that:

- no matter now long they have been employed, casuals, temporaries and some contractors are generally not eligible;
- the number of hours per week worked may affect eligibility of part time workers;
- some workers have periods of leave paid while others do not;
- the number of paid weeks can vary between awards;
- some women must serve a specified number of days after return to work to be entitled to paid leave;
- some confusion exists over the right to the same or a similar job;
- special conditions may exist where there are health risks to pregnant employees.

Also there are differences between length of service before being eligible for leave.

In some areas of the public sector some employees, both men and women, are eligible for leave which can be related to maternity leave. Some of the forms of leave available are: adoption leave (which can have very similar terms to maternity leave); parenting/parental/nurturing/family leave; and paternity leave. Other issues which are often raised with maternity leave are nursing breaks and child care.

For information on maternity and parental leave provisions existing throughout Australia and comparisons with other countries see Women's Bureau (1985), Wolcott (1987), Daniel (1981), Kamerman and Kahn (1981), Brown and Small (1985), ILO (1986).

1

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE OF EMPLOYEE SURVEY

In reporting on maternity leave from the employee perspective, first an examination of the use and non-use of maternity leave provisions in Australia is made which looks closely at the determinants of taking maternity leave. Second, because the conditions for leave vary widely between public and private sectors, an examination of maternity leave operation in the private sector is made. This is followed by an overview of maternity leave as it operates in the public sector.

What determines whether women return to work after childbirth is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. A brief description on the experience of maternity leave among sole parents is given in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 describes the current workforce status of respondents to the survey and gives an indication of what they would like as their preferred workforce participation. The final chapter in Part 1, Chapter 8, gives the views expressed by the women themselves concerning maternity leave.

Research Problems

Obtaining a picture of the operation of maternity leave from the employee perspective in Australia presents several problems. The major problem areas are documented below.

Sampling

Since the average number of births a woman has (at the present time) is between one and two, the need for maternity leave is a rare occurrence in the potential working lives of women spanning the years from age 15 to 65 years. Generally studies of maternity leave have used samples based on employer records. However, this approach is inadequate if one is interested in looking at use and non-use of maternity leave. The numbers of em-

ployees taking maternity leave is likely to be a small percentage of the total female labour force at a given time. The best approach is therefore to use a sample of women who have given birth. This approach was taken in a survey of maternity leave conducted by Daniel (1980) in the United Kingdom using a Social Security sampling frame of women in employment during their pregnancy who received payment during their maternity leave. As there is no universal paid maternity benefit for women in employment in Australia, no such sampling frame was available for this study. A sampling frame of women who gave birth in a particular week in Australia therefore was used, even though it was realised that many women within the sample would not be in scope for this study, that is, they would not have been in employment during their pregnancy.

Differential Maternity Leave Benefits

In Australia, as discussed in the Introduction, maternity leave benefits differ markedly between the public and private sector, and even within the public sector itself. Consequently, maternity leave entails different benefits for different groups of respondents. Because of this, data from respondents in the public and private sectors are examined separately on the matters of the use and non-use of maternity leave and the determinants of taking maternity leave.

Eligibility Problems

In addressing the main research question of the use and non-use of maternity leave by employees, the issue of eligibility needs to be considered. In order to be eligible for maternity leave employees must have not less than 12 months' continuous service with their employer, and must be full time or part time employees not casual or seasonal workers. In this study it was necessary therefore to determine whether employees were eligible for maternity leave or not.

The distinction needed to be made between formal and informal maternity leave. It became evident throughout the analysis that many women, particularly in the private sector, did not formally take maternity leave but nevertheless returned to the workforce within eighteen months of the birth, often to the same employer. Women in this situation are often said to have been on 'informal' maternity leave and this informal leave carries no right of return to a specific job or employer. Therefore the report distinguishes between women who were eligible and those who were ineligible for maternity leave, and also between those who took maternity leave and those who did not, even though they were eligible for maternity leave. For the purposes of this report, it has been assumed that all workers who stated that they had fulfilled the eligibility criteria, and were not casual or seasonal workers, were eligible for maternity leave.

Because the main focus of this report is on the use and non-use of mater-

nity leave, therefore the analysis concentrates on those women who met the eligibility criteria. Analysis of survey responses has been conducted on groupings of respondents based on eligibility for maternity leave and whether or not formal leave was taken. Three maternity leave status groups were defined among respondents in scope for this survey: eligible women who took maternity leave; eligible women who did not take maternity leave; and ineligible women.

The Sample and Response Rate

To overcome the sampling difficulties mentioned, all women who had given birth in a particular time period in Australia were surveyed. The period chosen was the last week in May 1984. Questionnaires were mailed during November 1985 to women (N = 4208) still in receipt of family allowance for a child born during that week.

The last week of May 1984 was chosen so that the time of the survey was approximately eighteen months after the birth. As maternity leave is, in most cases, available for a fifty-two week period, selecting a period eighteen months after the birth enabled us to get a good estimate of the return rate of women after maternity leave and the length of leave usually taken. There is a common belief that women, if they return to work after maternity leave, drop out of the workforce after several months, and one of the aims of the survey was to see if this in fact occurred.

In order to maintain confidentiality, Department of Social Security mailed the questionnaires together with a reply-paid envelope for return of the questionnaire to the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Accompanying the questionnaire was a letter explaining the survey, which stressed that this survey was voluntary and no information would be disclosed to the Department of Social Security. The Institute did not require names or addresses to be included on the questionnaire. In addition, a further explanation in five different languages — Arabic, Serbo-Croat, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese — was enclosed. These languages were chosen because data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates these are the most common languages based on countries of birth for mothers. The questionnaire also invited recipients to phone the Institute reverse charge if they had any problems or concerns regarding the questionnaire.

A follow-up reminder letter was mailed to the entire sample thanking those who had already responded and asking those who had not to please do so in the near future. This letter was mailed four weeks after the initial mail-out.

Out of a sample of 4208 women, the response rate (i.e. usable responses) was 50 per cent (N = 2012).

Evaluation of Sample

Before examining the determinants of maternity leave, some discussion of the maternity leave sample is required. An evaluation of the responses compared with the Department of Social Security sampling frame indicated no obvious bias, except in relation to age of respondents. Younger women are under-represented (See Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of maternity leave respondents with the sampling frame provided by the DSS Family Allowance list

	Maternity Leave Respondents (n = 2012) %	*Social Security Sample (n = 4208)* %
State		
New South Wales	35	38
Victoria	25	24
Queensland	16	16
South Australia	11	10
West Australia	10	9
Tasmania	3	2
Birthplace of Mother		
Australia	81	78
Other country	19	22
Marital Status		
Married	92	91
Unmarried	8	9
Age of Mother at First Birth		
20 years & under	4.8	9.7
21-25 years	29.6	31.5
26-30 years	42.9	37.0
31 years & over	22.7	22.0

As Table 1 illustrates, a comparison of the maternity leave respondents and the family allowance sampling frame provided by the Department of Social Security (DSS) shows that the distribution of respondents throughout States is similar.

The maternity leave sample has a slightly higher proportion of Australian born respondents 81 compared to 78 per cent. An examination of the statistics on births for 1984 from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that the study under-represents non-English speaking women.

Ninety-one per cent of the Social Security sample were married, whereas this sample contained 92 per cent who were married at the time of the birth.

The maternity leave sample under-represents the younger age groups. This is likely to be related to the higher proportion of women from some non-English speaking countries who tend to marry and give birth at an earlier age. It is likely that maternity leave is of less relevance to women who give birth at very young ages, as they are less likely to have been in the workforce or, if they are in the workforce, are less likely to have fulfilled the eligibility requirement for maternity leave. There is a tendency for the 26–30 year age group to be over-represented in the maternity leave sample.

In order to gain some idea of how the maternity leave sample compares with the general population in terms of income distribution, a comparison was made of this sample with a sample of women who had a child aged 0–4 years from the 1982 Income and Housing Survey. This comparison indicated that low-income families are represented in the right proportions in this survey.

2

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE OF MATERNITY LEAVE

As Chapter 1 noted, analysis of the survey data is concentrated on those women who were in scope, that is, women who were in employment during their 1983–84 pregnancy. Table 2 compares, on a variety of characteristics, women in scope with those not in scope, that is, women who were not in the workforce during their pregnancy.

Looking at the age distribution in Table 2, it can be seen there is no significant difference in age between both groups. With marital status there is also no significant difference.

Women in scope were significantly more likely to have higher education levels, to have only one child and to have fewer children than women who were not working during their pregnancy. There is no difference between the two groups when one looks at birthplace of mother.

Looking at household income, women in scope were more likely to come from households with higher household incomes. Turning to partner's income, those in scope, were more likely to have husbands or partners with higher incomes.

Use and Non-use of Maternity Leave

The main aim of the study was to determine the use and non-use of maternity leave provisions by female employees. Among all the women surveyed, irrespective of whether or not they were in the workforce during pregnancy, 28.5 per cent had at some time in their working lives taken maternity leave; 23 per cent had taken maternity leave once, 5 per cent twice, and less than one per cent three times. Of those respondents in scope in this survey (that is the 921 women in employment during their 1983–84 pregnancy), 37 per cent had had maternity leave once, 10 per cent twice, and one per cent had experienced maternity leave three times.

Table 2: Comparison of women in employment (in scope) during pregnancy with women not in workforce (not in scope) during pregnancy

Variable	*Respondents*	
	in scope (*n* = 921) %	*not in scope* (*n* = 1091) %
Age		
19-25 years	22	23
26-28 years	27	24
29-31 years	25	24
32 years +	26	30
Marital Status		
Married	93	90
Living together	2	3
Separated/divorced/widowed	2	4
Never married	3	3
Education Level		
4th form & under	39	53
5th form	14	17
6th form	19	16
tertiary	27	14**
Birthplace		
Australia	80	81
Other country	20	19
Current Household Income		
$20000 & under	26	44
$21000-30000	39	39
$30500-37500	15	9
$38000 +	20	8**
Partner's Income		
$12000 & under	13	24
$12500-22000	46	42
$22500 +	41	34**
Number of Children		
1 child	56	17
2 children	32	44
3 children	8	28
4+ children	3	11*
Age of Oldest Child		
Under 5 years	57	51
5-9 years	28	36
10-14 years	9	10
15 years +	6	3

Note: Significance * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$

Of women in scope, 44 per cent took maternity leave (see Figure 1), 73 per cent of whom completed their contract with their employer and returned to work.

But what of the women in scope who did not take formal maternity leave? It is estimated that 32 per cent of women in scope were eligible for maternity leave, but did not take it. Among these, 44 per cent had returned to work at the time they completed the questionnaire.

The remaining 24 per cent of women employed during pregnancy were not eligible for maternity leave, the main reasons being that they had not been employed for twelve months continuously with their employer, or they were working in casual or temporary positions. Of these 216 women who were ineligible for maternity leave, 58 per cent returned to the workforce after the birth.

The findings indicate that of all the women who were employed during pregnancy less than half formally took maternity leave and of all those eligible just over half (57 per cent) actually took it.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to identify and explain the reasons why some women take formal maternity leave and others do not, even though they are qualified to do so.

Characteristics of Maternity Leave Taking

Apart from fulfilling the eligibility criteria, it was anticipated that the determinants of taking maternity leave would relate to individual characteristics of the women themselves and to characteristics of organizations which employed them. Further, determinants were expected to relate to knowledge of maternity leave provisions, commitment to workforce participation, and values regarding work and family responsibilities. In designing this study it was hypothesized that the following characteristics would be related to the taking of maternity leave.

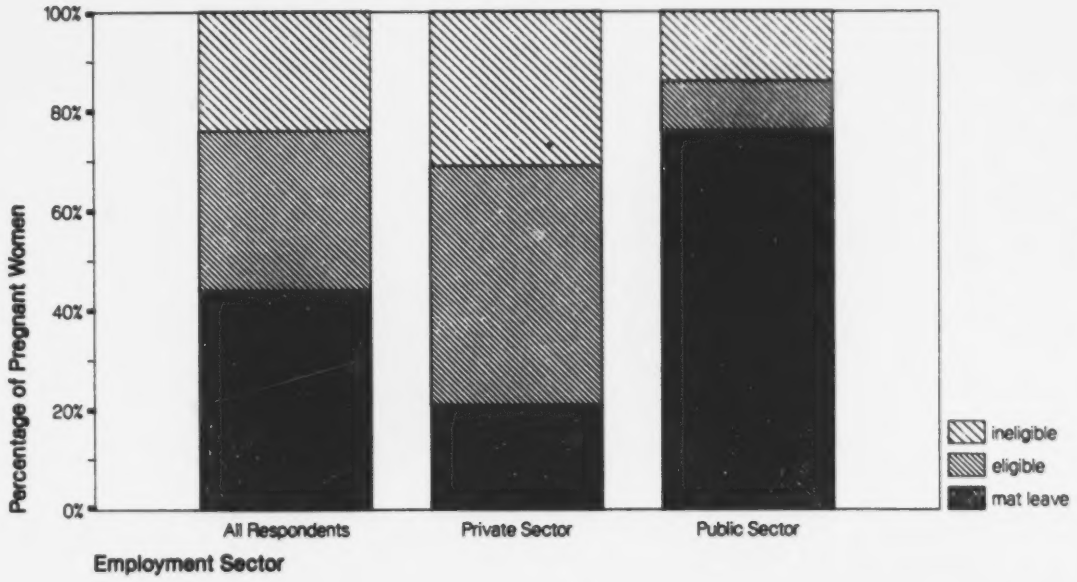
1. **Demographic characteristics of respondent**

State of residence
Metropolitan or rural residence
Country of birth
Age of respondent
Number of children
Education level
Occupational status
Income (both personal and household)

2. **Employment characteristics**

Sector of employment (public or private sector)
Establishment size
Trade Union membership

Figure 1 :
Maternity Leave Take-up
By Employment Sector



Fulfilling eligibility criteria — that is being with the employer for at least twelve months prior to the birth and not being employed on a casual or temporary basis

3. **Knowledge and awareness of maternity leave provisions**

Source of information about maternity leave

4. **Commitment to workforce participation**

Length of time in the workforce prior to birth

Length of time employed by employer

5. **Work and family values**

Table 3 shows the relationship between the taking of maternity leave and the demographic, employment and knowledge characteristics listed above.

Table 3: Utilization and non-utilization of maternity leave

Variable	*Maternity Leave* %	*No Maternity Leave* %	*Ineligible for Maternity Leave* %	*n*
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS				
State of residence				
N.S.W., A.C.T.	46	28	26	336
Q'land	31	37	33	117
S.A., N.T.	43	28	29	103
Tas.	52	28	20	25
Vic.	44	39	17	244
W.A.	39	39	23	78*
Metropolitan/Other				
Capital City	42	35	21	537
Large town	42	30	24	92
Elsewhere	42	29	28	283
Birthplace of respondent				
English-speaking country	43	33	24	809
Other	44	35	20	88
Age of Respondent				
17-25 years	24	40	36	199
26-28 years	44	36	20	249
29-31 years	52	27	20	234
32 years and over	48	29	23	223**
Education Level				
less than Form 4	28	43	29	90
Form 4	32	38	29	266
Form 5	40	43	18	129
Form 6	41	37	23	169
Tertiary	63	16	21	242**

Occupational Status				
Managerial/Professional	71	15	15	198
Para-professional	42	30	28	89
Clerical	43	37	20	350
Sales/Service	18	53	29	131
Manual	28	38	34	86**
Household Income during pregnancy				
Less than $20 000	16	36	48	172
$21-30 000	35	38	27	275
$30 500-37 500	49	38	13	416
$38 000 +	66	21	14	220**
EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS				
Sector				
Public	76	10	15	357
Private	21	48	31	519**
Trade Union membership				
Member of a Trade Union	63	22	15	413
Not a member of a Trade Union	25	43	33	483**
KNOWLEDGE OF ML PROVISIONS				
No information	3	54	44	230
From workmates	51	31	18	187
From union	67	20	17	66
From employer	71	22	7	203
From government department	61	27	12	45
From other source	30	30	40	74**

Note: Significance * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$

Demographic Characteristics

State of Residence: It appears that Tasmania is the state with the highest take up of maternity leave, however the small sample size (25 cases) may account for this. New South Wales in combination with ACT has a take-up rate of 46 per cent. The other large state, Victoria, has a take-up of 44 per cent followed by South Australia and the Northern Territory with 43 per cent. Queensland has the lowest use of maternity leave and the highest rate of women ineligible for maternity leave. It seems that the legislation in New South Wales has not led to significantly higher usage of maternity leave than in other States. With the exception of Tasmania, where take-up is over 50 per cent, less than half the women employed during pregnancy in every other State take maternity leave and less than a third use maternity leave in Queensland.

45

Metropolitan/Rural Residence: There is no significant difference between metropolitan (capital city) take-up of maternity leave and the use of maternity leave in large towns or rural areas.

Birthplace of Mother: There is no significant difference in the use of maternity leave between women born in either Australia or other English-speaking countries and women from non-English speaking countries.

Age of respondent: Women who take maternity leave tend to be older than those who do not take it, whether they are eligible for leave or do not qualify. The differences between the groups are statistically significant.

Education Level: Employees who take maternity leave are significantly more likely to have received a higher education than those who do not take it, whether eligible or not. Just under thirty per cent of those who did not qualify for maternity leave, due to either insufficient time employed by their employer or being employed on a casual basis, have education levels less than fourth form or fourth form only.

Occupation: Women with higher status occupations working in managerial and professional occupations are significantly more likely to take maternity leave. There is also substantial take-up of maternity leave by women in para-professional occupations and clerical occupations (42 and 43 per cent respectively). Over half the women employed in sales and service occupations are eligible, but do not use the maternity leave provisions.

Household Income: Household income during pregnancy is significantly related to whether or not one takes maternity leave. Women with higher household incomes are more likely to take maternity leave. This also applies to the level of the respondent's income and the partner's income. However, it must be borne in mind that household income also reflects full time or part-time workforce participation.

Employment Characteristics

Sector of Employment: Seventy-six per cent of those who are employed in the public sector take maternity leave, compared to twenty-one per cent of those employed in the private sector. Almost half the women employed in the private sector (48%) are eligible for leave but do not take it. Maternity leave benefits vary markedly between private and public sectors and within the public sector itself. Also maternity leave benefits have been available for a much longer time period in the public sector than in the private sector. Broadly speaking the maternity leave provisions of the federal government and the Victorian and New South Wales State governments contain a period of paid leave, other State governments are similar to the private sector in that they provide a period of twelve months unpaid leave and the right to reinstatement in the same or equivalent position. (The Women's Bureau Information Paper No. 3 sets out provisions of maternity leave in detail.)

Trade Union Membership: Forty-six per cent of women employed during their pregnancy were members of a trade union or association. Sixty-three per cent of those who were members of a union took maternity leave, compared to 25 per cent of those who were not union members. Maternity leave usage is therefore significantly related to trade union membership.

Maternity leave use by industry sector and establishment size will be discussed in a following chapter which focuses on maternity leave in the private sector.

Knowledge and Awareness of Maternity Leave Provisions

Overall, 27 per cent of women in scope had no information about maternity leave during their pregnancy. Fifty-four per cent of women who qualified for maternity leave but did not take it had no information about maternity leave provisions; forty-four per cent of women who did not qualify had no information.

Commitment to Workforce Participation

It seems likely that the taking of maternity leave is related to a commitment or attachment to workforce participation. Previous research on the labour force participation of women with children indicates that one of the determining factors of participation is having a commitment to being in the labour force (Mott and Shapiro 1983; Greenstein 1986; McLaughlin 1982; Waite, Haggstrom and Kanouse 1985).

Various measures have been used to measure commitment or attachment to the workforce. One is the time an employee remains in the workforce prior to a birth. Another is how long an employee has been working for an employer which can be regarded as attachment to a particular job.

Figures 2 and 3 show both the timing of the exit from the labour force before the birth and the timing of the return to the workforce after the birth for both public and private sector employees respectively in the three maternity leave status groups (eligible takers, eligible non-takers, and ineligible women). These figures also illustrate retention rates after the birth for each maternity leave status group.

As these figures show, in both the private and public sectors those who take maternity leave tend to continue in the workforce until later in the pregnancy than those who do not take it. Looking at the right hand side of both figures (that is, number of weeks after the birth that women returned to the labour force), it can be seen in all three groups women begin returning to the workforce after six weeks.

In the private sector there is a much higher retention rate among women who took maternity leave (73%) compared to 41 per cent retention of

Figure 2 :
Exit & Return to the Workforce

Private Sector Employees

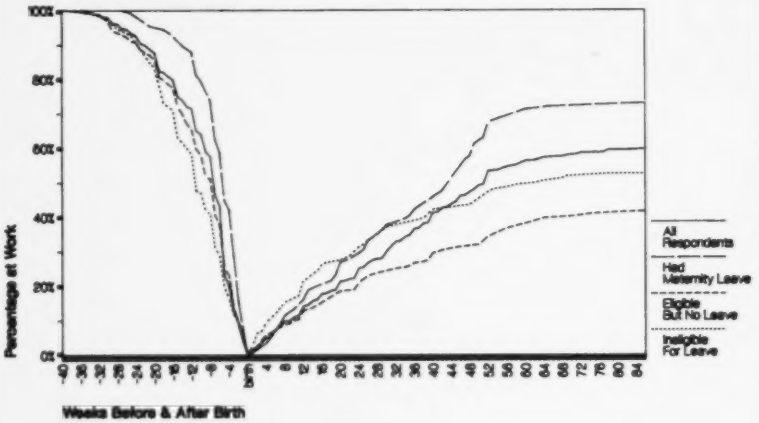
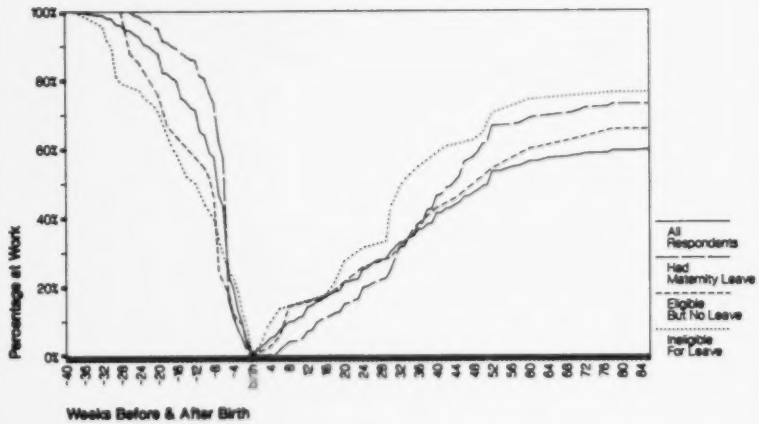


Figure 3 :
Exit & Return to the Workforce

Public Sector Employees



eligible women who did not take leave, and 53 per cent of women in the private sector who were not eligible.

In the public sector, the retention rates among the three groups are similar, 70 per cent and above. It must be borne in mind that the number of eligible women who did not take maternity leave and of ineligible employees is quite small.

Looking now at the number of years before the birth employees had been in employment with their employer, Figures 4 and 5 show the commencement year in each maternity leave status group. With the exception of women ineligible for maternity leave, respondents who did qualify had been in employment with their employer for a considerable length of time. For maternity leave takers in the public sector, the median number of years working for their employer was around 6 to 7 years: in the private sector, the median number of years was between 4 and 5 years. In both sectors, those who were eligible but did not take maternity leave had been employed for around four years. However, it should be noted that public sector employees in most cases have portability of maternity leave benefits within the public service, which means they are able to carry maternity leave rights with them to new jobs in the public sector, a benefit private sector women do not have.

In the private sector, 69 per cent of women who qualified for maternity leave did not take it, and of these, 45 per cent had no information about maternity leave entitlements. A large number of women in the private sector who had no awareness of maternity leave had fulfilled the eligibility criteria and had worked on average five years with their employer. Women employed in the private sector were more likely to complain about lack of information, as some women said:

> 'Employees should be told by their employer of all leave they are entitled to. So everyone is clear of what is due to them.'
> 'Employers should be compelled to inform employees of maternity rights.'
> 'I didn't even know it was available. I think it should be published more widely.'
> 'I'm glad maternity leave has been introduced because when I was working during 1977 with my first child, I had to leave, losing my accumulated sick days and long service leave, even though I went back to the same employer three months later.'
> 'I wish I'd been informed if I was eligible, as I have worked for the same company since I was 16 years of age — I am now 32 years old.'

The survey results illustrate that there are significant differences between women who take maternity leave, those who though eligible do not take it, and those who do not qualify. Because the major focus of this report is on use and non-use of maternity leave, the report concentrates on those women who met the eligibility criteria. Those who were ineligible for maternity leave, either because they had not worked sufficient time with their employer or they were employed in casual or temporary positions, are not

Figure 4 : Maternity Leave Use by Year Commenced with Employer

Private Sector Employees

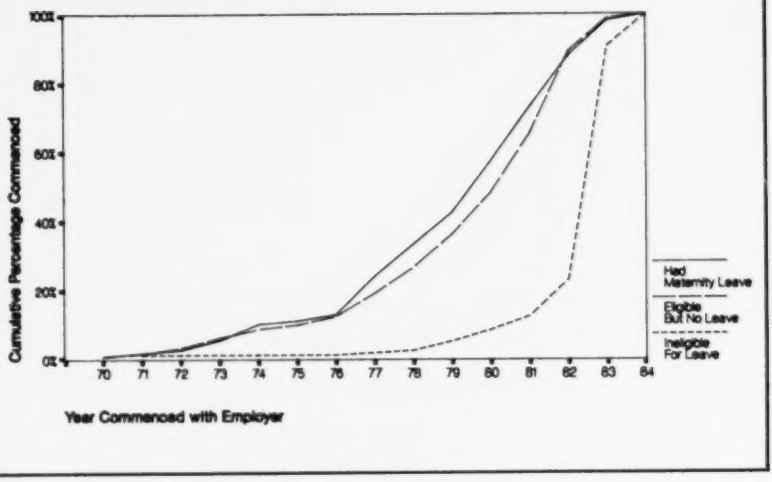
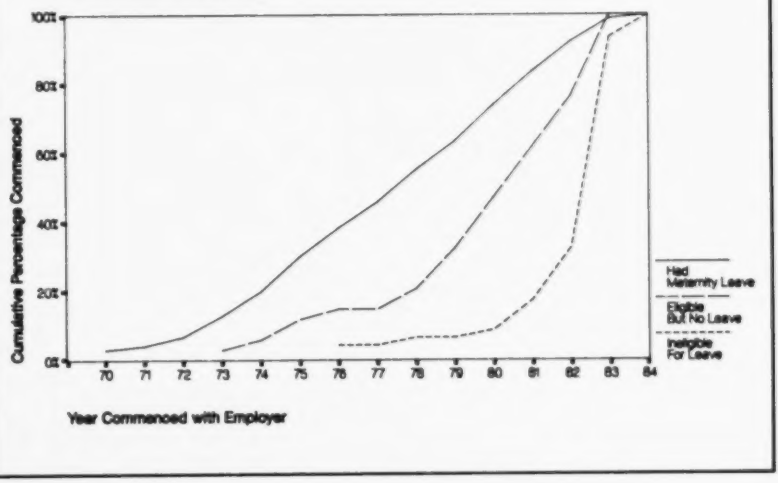


Figure 5 : Maternity Leave Use by Year Commenced with Employer

Public Sector Employees



considered in the main body of the analysis. However, the high rate of ineligibility among respondents is an important issue, particularly as approximately one third of women employed in the private sector were ineligible. Since it is part of the explanation why maternity leave usage is so low in the private sector, it undoubtedly warrants further consideration.

Determinants and Antecedents of Maternity Leave Taking

The bivariate relationships shown in Table 3 provide some information on the use of maternity leave. However, these may be misleading due to inter-relationships among variables. To overcome this problem, and in order to identify and explain the reasons why some women take formal maternity leave and others do not, the technique of multiple regression was used entering variables in separate blocks. These variables were:

1. **Individual Characteristics**

Respondent's income
High education/low education
Work-family values scale (a measure of values concerning combining working and childrearing, see Appendix 2)
Knowledge of maternity leave
Work commitment — as measured by number of weeks before the expected date of confinement (EDC) that respondent stayed in workforce
Work attachment — number of years working with employer
Union membership

2. **Employment Characteristics**

Establishment size
Sector (Public/Private)

The following variables were excluded from the multiple regression as they did not have a statistically significant relationship with the taking of maternity leave after the effects of the other variables were taken into account: age of respondent; country of birth; metropolitan/rural; age at first birth; occupational status; first child/later child; household income(1).

Table 4 summarizes the three different models tested here. In the first model variables which related to individual characteristics were entered in the regression as the first block. All the Pearson's r correlations in the first column are statistically significant, that is, all the variables relating to individual characteristics included in the regression are significantly correlated with the taking of maternity leave. The second column contains the beta weights which indicate that, controlling for all the other variables in the equation, each of the variables is statistically significant and they account for 42 per cent of the overall variance.

Table 4: Determinants and antecedents of maternity leave: multiple regression analysis

Variable	*R*	*Model 1 Beta*	*Model 2 Beta*	*Model 3 Beta*
Individual characteristics				
High education	.32	.10**		.07*
Respondent's income	.39	.09*		.03
Knowledge of ML	−.51	−.33**		−.26**
Work-family values	−.31	−.16**		−.10**
Weeks before EDC stayed in workforce	−.28	−.17**		−.17**
Years employed with employer	.22	.08*		.04
Union membership	.39	.19**		.09*
Employment characteristics				
Sector	.59		.58**	.36**
Organizational size	.19		.12**	.06*
		R2 = .42	R2 = .36	R2 = .52

Note: Significance * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$

Model 1 results indicate that not having knowledge of maternity leave is the most significant reason for not taking it. The next variable in importance is being a member of a trade union, which would also be associated with working in a unionized organization. The variables included to measure work commitment and work attachment, staying in the workforce until just before the due date of the birth (i.e. working until late in the pregnancy) and having been employed for many years with the employer are statistically related to taking maternity leave. Higher levels of income and high educational qualifications are related to taking maternity leave. Having values concerning work and childrearing which see workforce participation and childrearing as complementary rather than mutually exclusive is also independently related to taking maternity leave.

The second model tested entered employment characteristics in the first block (third column). Both working in the public sector and organizational size are statistically significant. The variance accounted for is 36 per cent, public sector employment is the major contributor with a beta of .58.

The third model (column four) shows that, when individual and employment characteristics are combined, the amount of overall variance accounted for is 52 per cent. This indicates that individual characteristics account for an additional 16 per cent of the variance when combined with sector and organizational size. These results demonstrate the relationship between individual employee characteristics and employment characteristics. It can also be seen that combining employment characteristics and individual characteristics changes the beta weights of the individual characteristics

substantially. The main reason for this is that working in the public sector is the major determinant of maternity leave (beta .36), and most women with high status occupations, higher education and correspondingly higher incomes compared to other women in the survey were employed in the public sector (for example teachers, nurses, and social welfare workers). The employee characteristics which are no longer significant in the equation are respondent's income and the work attachment measure (number of years working for employer). It should be noted that in the public sector maternity leave benefits are transferable in most instances when one moves within the public service, which may account for this relationship not remaining significant when sector is entered into the equation in the second stage.

In addition to public sector employment, size of establishment is significantly related to use of maternity leave provisions, which suggests that those employed by large private sector establishments are more likely to take maternity leave (note that we are talking here of establishments not enterprises).

Trade union membership remains significant in the final equation, although the beta is considerably lower, doubtless due to the high unionization of the public sector.

Knowledge of maternity leave is related to maternity leave use for obvious reasons — one is unlikely to apply for leave one does not know about and there is a high level of ignorance of maternity leave provisions in the private sector.

Women who have traditional values about motherhood and childrearing as opposed to views which regard childrearing and workforce participation as complementary are significantly less likely to take maternity leave. Traditional values about motherhood and workforce participation are associated with lower occupational status and lower education (Glezer 1984) and women with lower education and lower status occupations are more likely to be employed in the private sector than the public sector. High education remains significant. One of the measures used for work attachment, the number of weeks before the expected due date of the birth, is significant. Women who stay in the workforce until late in their pregnancy are more likely to take maternity leave. Later in this report it will be demonstrated that, irrespective of whether or not women take maternity leave, staying in the workforce late during the pregnancy is related to returning to the workforce within eighteen months of the birth. This finding is similar to other research which has shown work attachment (as measured here) is related to continuity in the workforce for women after the birth of their first child (Greenstein, 1986; McLaughlin, 1982; Mott & Shapiro, 1983; Waite, Haggstrom & Kanouse, 1985).

In summary, the results show that the taking of maternity leave in order of importance is related to:

- working in the public sector;
- having information about maternity leave;

- staying in the workforce until just before the EDC (work attachment);
- having work-family values which see work and childrearing as complementary;
- being a member of a trade union;
- having a high education; and
- working for a large establishment.

To express these regression findings in another way, a hypothetical portrait of the employee who takes maternity leave in Australia would be a woman who is employed in the public sector or, if a private sector employee, in a large organization. She would be likely to be a trade union member, and to have information about maternity leave. She would stay on in the workforce until around six weeks before the birth. She would be more likely to have had some tertiary education, and, when it comes to her values concerning working and childrearing, she would tend to see employment and childrearing as complementary.

The hypothetical portrait of the employee who does not take maternity leave would be a woman employed in the private sector. The establishment where she is employed would be likely to be small to medium size. She would neither be a trade union member, nor be likely to have heard of maternity leave. Possibly she would have left work prior to six weeks before the birth. She would be unlikely to have received any tertiary education. Her feelings about working when she has pre-school children would be very ambivalent.

Lack of information about maternity leave provisions before the birth is one of the significant factors that determine not taking maternity leave. One in five women eligible for maternity leave had no information about it.

Of the 239 women who had been in employment during their pregnancy and had no knowledge of maternity leave provisions, 54 per cent were eligible for maternity leave. An examination of these women shows that:

- The great majority (90%) were employed in the private sector. An examination of the industries in which they were employed indicates that they are more likely to be employed in the wholesale retail industry, finance business and property, and the health industry. They are significantly more likely to be employed in a small establishment and not be unionized.

- These women were significantly more likely to have lower status occupations, lower education levels, lower household incomes, in other words, the women most in need of income with least resources.

Not only do employees lack information about maternity leave rights, they lack awareness about whether or not they work under an award and if so, what that award is. Only 39 per cent of women knew the award under which they were employed; significantly more public sector women had knowledge in this area compared to private sector women.

Paternity Leave

While the main concern of this survey was maternity leave, respondents were asked about whether their partner had taken leave at the time of the birth and whether this leave had been paternity leave. A brief mention is made here about paternity leave.

Paternity leave, or time off for fathers at the time of the birth, is available in some sections of the public sector, but generally not in the private sector. However, in this study it was found that 1096 partners took leave at the time of the birth of their child. Fifty-nine per cent of the partnered women in the sample had partners who took leave at the time of the birth, 35 per cent had partners who took no time off work, and seven per cent had partners who were unemployed.

Table 5 shows the length of leave taken by fathers. The average amount of time taken off at the time of the birth was 9.7 days (median 9.5 days).

The most common form of leave taken by fathers at the time of the birth was recreation leave (40%), followed by paternity or parental leave.

Table 5: Type of leave and length of time taken by fathers at time of the birth

Type of leave (a)	*Fathers who took leave* %
Paternity/Parental leave	16
Recreation leave	40
Special paid leave	10
Unpaid time off	12
Sick leave	5
Other leave	8
Number of days	*Fathers who took time* %
1 day	6
2-4 days	14
5 days	25
6-10 days	33
11-15 days	11
16-20 days	8
21 days +	5

Note: (a) respondents could give more than one response

Note: (1) It should be noted that our dependent variable is a dichotomous variable, which is a violation of a formal assumption of the regression model which requires that the dependent variable be normally distributed and of a constant variance. However, according to Cohen and Cohen (1975), p.230, 'In practice, and with support from the central limit theorem and empirical studies, dichotomous dependent variables are profitably employed in MRC.'

3

MATERNITY LEAVE USE AND RETURN TO WORK IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Clearly, the taking of maternity leave is a public sector phenomenon. Public sector employment is related to the taking of formal maternity leave; low take-up of maternity leave is related to working in the private sector. Seventy-one per cent of those who took maternity leave were employed in the public sector, whereas only 29 per cent of maternity leave takers were in the private sector.

Comparison of Public and Private Sector

Because of higher utilization of maternity leave by respondents from the public sector as opposed to those from the private sector, and because there are differences in maternity leave provisions between the two sectors, each sector is analysed and described separately throughout the book.

After briefly comparing the characteristics of public and private sector respondents, maternity leave in the private sector will be examined in this chapter. Table 6 illustrates the differences between public and private sector employees who were employed during their 1983–84 pregnancy. The table shows that those employed in the private sector tended to be younger in age; 26 per cent aged between 17 and 25 years compared to 13 per cent of women employed in the public sector. Fifty-nine per cent of public sector women were aged 29 years and over compared to 48 per cent of women in the private sector.

There is little difference in marital status between public and private sector employees; 96 per cent of those in the public sector being married compared to 92 per cent in the private sector. There is also no difference in the number of children or family size between public and private sector employed women. Fifty-seven per cent of public sector women and 56 per cent of private sector women had their first child in May 1984.

Table 6: Comparison of public and private sector employment during pregnancy, 1983-84

Variable	*Public Sector (n = 358)* %	*Private Sector (n = 530)* %
EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS		
Age		
17-25 years	13	26
26-28 years	28	26
29-31 years	31	23
32 + years	28	25
Education Level		
4th form & under	23	50
5th form	11	16
6th form	19	19
Tertiary	47	15
Marital Status		
Married	96	92
Number of children		
1 child	57	56
2 children	32	32
3 + children	11	12
Occupation during pregnancy		
Managerial/Professional	42	11
Para-professional	16	6
Clerical	33	48
Sales/service	6	21
Manual etc.	3	14
Household income during pregnancy		
$20000 & under	10	24
$21000-30000	22	38
$30500-37500	26	24
$38000 +	42	15
Employment characteristics		
Union membership	70	30
Working hours during pregnancy		
35 hours +	71	59
less than 35 hours	29	41
Preferred working arrangements		
Full time	6	6
Part time	72	64
Not working	22	30
Currently in workforce	64	47

Knowledge of maternity leave during pregnancy		
No information	6	40
From workmates	27	18
From union	10	6
From employer	42	23
From government department	8	3
Other source	6	11
Use of maternity leave		
Took maternity leave	76	21
Eligible but did not take maternity leave	10	48
Did not qualify for maternity leave	15	31

Women employed in the public sector during pregnancy came from households with higher incomes; 42 per cent compared to 15 per cent in the private sector came from households with $38 000 p.a. or more. At the low income end, 24 per cent of private sector employees were in households where the income was $20 000 p.a. or less compared to 10 per cent of public sector employees. The explanation for this is no doubt the higher education levels and occupational status of women in the public sector.

A high proportion of women in the public sector have managerial or professional occupations; 42 per cent compared to 11 per cent in the private sector. There is a higher level of para-professionals in the public sector; 16 per cent compared to 6 per cent in the private sector. Forty-eight per cent of women employed in the private sector were in clerical occupations compared to a third of public sector employees. On the other hand, 35 per cent of private sector employees were in sales, service and manual jobs compared to 9 per cent in the public sector.

Seventy per cent of public sector women were members of unions compared to 30 per cent of private sector employees. Eighty-six per cent of public sector employees had worked for their employer for more than twelve months in a permanent, non-casual position, which is the requirement for eligibility for maternity leave, compared to 69 per cent of women in the private sector. Knowledge of maternity leave was far greater in the public sector; only six per cent had no information on maternity leave compared to 40 per cent in the private sector. The main sources of information for both public and private sector employees were their employer (42 and 23 per cent respectively) or workmates (27 and 18 per cent respectively).

Seventy-six per cent of public sector women took maternity leave compared to 21 per cent of private sector women. The group who were eligible but did not take leave constituted 48 per cent of private sector women, compared to only 10 per cent of women in the public sector. Just under a third of women in the private sector were not qualified for maternity leave compared to only 15 per cent working in the public sector.

To sum up, the characteristics of public and private sector employees

differ markedly. Public sector employees are better educated and have correspondingly higher status occupations. They have higher household incomes and tend to be older in years (no doubt because employment and the birth of the first child are delayed until education is completed). They are more highly unionized and have more awareness of maternity leave and are therefore more likely to take maternity leave than their sisters in the private sector. Also they are more likely to return to the workforce after the birth.

Influences on Maternity Leave Use

The differences between private sector and public sector female employment have been previously demonstrated. Maternity leave benefits for both sectors differ substantially. Not only has the public sector had benefits available for a longer time, but in the federal government and the two largest States, New South Wales and Victoria, maternity leave involves a paid component. Table 7 illustrates the relative influence of various characteristics on the use of maternity leave provisions in the private sector.

Table 7: Private sector by maternity leave status

Variable	*Maternity Leave* $n = 111$ %	*No Maternity Leave* $n = 248$ %	*Ineligible Maternity Leave* $n = 159$ %	*Total* $n = 518$
All private sector employees	21	48	31	
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS				
State of residence				
N.S.W., A.C.T.	24	45	31	185
Q'land	14	44	42	79
S.A., N.T.	18	45	37	49
Tas.	15	54	31	13
Vic.	25	51	24	146
W.A.	17	57	26	46
Industry Sector				
Manufacturing	25	54	21	91
Wholesale/Retail	10	53	27	116
Finance	35	46	19	106
Community Services	23	43	34	105
Recreation/Personal Servs	11	39	50	38
Other	17	45	38	53*
Size of Establishment (a)				
1-19	13	52	35	252
20-49	24	50	27	68
50-99	33	40	27	60
100-499	25	51	25	81
500 +	53	28	19	36**

EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS				
Occupational Status				
Managerial/Professional	44	39	17	52
Para-professional	19	45	36	31
Clerical	23	51	26	230
Sales/Service	9	60	31	100
Manual	23	41	36	66**
Trade Union Affiliation				
Membership	35	42	23	155
No affiliation	16	51	34	363**
Education Level				
Form 4 or less	20	47	33	255
Form 5	18	58	24	84
Form 6	20	48	32	100
Tertiary	33	37	30	75
Age Group				
17-25	13	46	41	134
26-28	20	55	25	135
29-31	24	45	36	121
32 +	29	46	26	129*
Household Income During Pregnancy				
Less than $20 000	10	40	50	121
$21 000–30 000	22	47	31	194
$30 500–37 500	26	58	16	123
$38 000 +	31	47	23	75**
Number of Children				
1 child	21	54	25	288
2 children	22	41	37	167
3 or more children	22	32	39	62

Note: (a) 4% answered 'do not know' to this question.
Significance * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$

Demographic Characteristics

State: It appears that the larger states, New South Wales and Victoria, have the highest use of maternity leave; 24 and 25 per cent respectively. New South Wales introduced legislation in 1980 granting maternity leave to all female employees, but it does not appear to have produced greater usage of maternity leave provisions than in Victoria (which at time of survey had not introduced maternity leave legislation). Queensland has the lowest use of maternity leave with only 14 per cent of private sector employees taking it. This is partly accounted for by the high rate of women ineligible for maternity leave in Queensland (42%). In Western Australia, Tasmania and Vic-

toria over 50 per cent of private sector women eligible for leave failed to take formal maternity leave.

Industry: The industry sector with the highest take up of maternity leave is that of Finance/Property/Business with 35 per cent of women in the sample taking maternity leave, followed by the Manufacturing sector with 25 per cent and Community Services with 23 per cent (community services includes health, education and welfare organizations). The industry sectors with very low maternity leave take-up are Wholesale/Retail, and Recreation/Personal Services. Both these sectors have high proportions of casual part-time workers and younger casual employees. Fifty per cent of women in the Recreation/Personal Services sector were ineligible for maternity leave and 27 per cent in the Wholesale/Retail area. In the Community Services area, 34 per cent were ineligible. Part of the explanation of the high rate of ineligibility in the recreation and personal service area and the community service area may be that both these sectors include industries that require 24-hour staffing, for example, hospitals, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants.

Business Size: The use of maternity leave seems highly related to business size. Fifty-three per cent of employees of large establishments with 500 or more employees take maternity leave. There is a lower rate of employees ineligible for maternity leave in large establishments than in small businesses. Caution must be exercised in interpreting this finding. In relation to size, this report refers to 'size of establishment at the location where the respondent worked'; in other words, some women employed by major retail chains or banks may work in small to medium sized establishments of these enterprises.

The next section deals with the operation of maternity leave in the private sector from the individual employees' perspective.

Employee Characteristics

Occupational Status: Maternity leave is more likely to be taken by employees in managerial/professional occupations (44%), than those in clerical occupations (23%), or by manual workers (23%). The take-up of maternity leave, among those in sales and service occupations is very low (9%); over 60 per cent of these women appeared eligible for maternity leave but did not take up the option. Over half the private sector clerical workers failed to take maternity leave.

Education: More women with tertiary education take maternity leave (33%).

Age: There is a linear relationship with age and take up of maternity leave; the older the respondent, the more likely she is to take leave.

Household Income: There is also a linear relationship with household income; the higher the income, the more likely respondents are to take maternity leave.

Number of Children: This does not affect the taking of maternity leave. Just over one in five women take maternity leave irrespective of the number of children they have. Over half those who were about to have their first birth were eligible for maternity leave but did not take it. Later analysis shows that these are the women who are likely to drop out of the labour force. The high number of women ineligible for maternity leave with more than one child is related to their greater use of casual/part-time employment.

Generally, the use of maternity leave is low in the private sector with a large number of women eligible but failing to take formal maternity leave. In Table 6 it shows that 40 per cent of women in the private sector had no information about maternity leave. Table 8 shows where women obtained information about maternity leave:

Table 8: Knowledge of maternity leave provisions among women eligible for maternity leave in the private sector

Source of Information	*Took Maternity Leave* %	*Did Not Take Maternity Leave* %
No information	4	46
From workmates	20	18
From union	13	4
From employer	51	20
From doctor	2	—
From government department	2	4
Other sources	9	9

The best source of information for private sector employees who took maternity leave was employers, the next best source being workmates (20%), followed by unions (13%). Among those who did not take leave almost half, 46 per cent, had no information about maternity leave, and for those who did have information, the main source of information was employers (20%) followed by workmates (18%).

The high degree of ignorance of maternity leave among private sector employees is a cause for concern. A cross tabulation of occupational status by information showed that around one quarter of those in managerial, professional and para-professional positions, just over a third of clerical workers, and half those in sales, service and manual occupations had no information about maternity leave benefits.

While union membership is low among private sector employees (around one third of women), an examination of private sector women who were members showed that 25 per cent had no information on maternity leave

provisions, around a quarter were given information by their employer and another quarter by workmates. Only 17 per cent of union members got their information from the union.

Among union members who were eligible for maternity leave only 45 per cent took maternity leave. The reasons why maternity leave was not taken by eligible employees are set out in Table 9.

64

Table 9: Reasons for not taking maternity leave among employees who qualified for maternity leave in the private sector

Reason	*(n = 249)* % *(a)*
Wanted to give up work	54
Wanted to breastfeed	33
Thought job would be too demanding	21
Knew nothing about it	17
Believed I was not eligible	14
Wanted to work less hours	14
Wanted to leave that job	12
Thought leave was not long enough	4
Was dismissed	4

Note: (a) respondents gave more than one reason, therefore percentages do not add to 100

The majority of those in the private sector who failed to take maternity leave wanted to give up work, a third mentioned breastfeeding, and one fifth thought their job would be too demanding. Fourteen per cent believed they were ineligible for maternity leave and another 14 per cent wanted to switch from full to part-time work. Only 17 per cent said the reason for not taking maternity leave was that they did not know about it. Even though many private sector women had no information about maternity leave (46 per cent), a number of them would not have taken up the option had they had information about the provisions.

Among women who qualified but did not take maternity leave, 72 per cent resigned from their job, 16 per cent resigned with an option to return later, 6 per cent were asked to leave or were retrenched, and 7 per cent took some other leave such as leave without pay or long service leave. At the time of the survey (eighteen months after the birth), 40 per cent of women who did not take formal maternity leave were back in the workforce.

Employer Reaction to Pregnancy

On the positive side, just under a third of private sector employers gave women workers lighter duties and more flexible working hours during pregnancy (see Table 10). Almost half the employers gave women who took maternity leave time off during working hours for ante-natal visits and 39 per cent of women who did not take leave were granted time off for ante-natal care. Employers are not required to provide time off for ante-natal

care but many obviously do. The women also mentioned things like employers being understanding about morning sickness and general concern about their wellbeing.

> 'My employer was very helpful. I had to leave much earlier than planned as my baby was 13 weeks premature. My job was left open for me in case the baby didn't survive. He did survive, so I didn't return to my job.'
> 'I found my employer very understanding and considerate at all times.'

On the other hand, a few employees had complaints about poor employer reactions. Although it is against the law for an employer to dismiss an employee on the grounds of her pregnancy or absence on maternity leave, five per cent of women who were qualified for maternity leave were asked to leave or dismissed by their employer during pregnancy. In one instance a young unskilled, single, low-educated packer in the food industry was dismissed when five months pregnant, but was given a job by the same employer after the birth.

In another case a salesgirl in a well-known fashion chain was told that pregnant women were not employed as they could not wear the clothes the store sold, and she was dismissed. One woman working in the textile, clothing and footwear industry doing clerical work was retrenched after she informed her employer that she was pregnant. Another woman working as a ward's maid was dismissed by her employer who did not believe she was suffering from bad morning sickness.

The above examples illustrate some of the circumstances of dismissal, however, dismissal during pregnancy is a rare occurrence in the private sector, but it does occur.

Table 10: Employer reactions to pregnancy reported by women eligible for maternity leave in the private sector

Reaction	*Took Maternity Leave* %	*Did Not Take Maternity Leave* %
Positive		
Employer gave lighter duties	32	27
More flexible hours	26	31
Ante-natal visits during working hours	49	39
Other help	12	10
Negative		
Asked me to leave	–	5
Given different unwanted duties	3	3
Requested but not given different duties	4	2
Asked to start maternity leave earlier or later	4	3
Refused time off for ante-natal visits	3	5

Employee Experience of Maternity Leave

This section concentrates on women in the private sector who took maternity leave. When applying for maternity leave, 60 per cent of employees produced a doctor's certificate confirming pregnancy, 75 per cent applied in writing for maternity leave, and 65 per cent gave an indication of the date of their return. The median number of weeks of maternity leave requested was fifty-two weeks, however 15 per cent requested 12 weeks or less, and 16 per cent between 13 and 26 weeks. The median number of weeks of maternity leave granted by employers was 52 weeks.

In addition to taking maternity leave, 32 per cent (36 cases) used additional leave accrued. Of these, 17 per cent used sick leave, 94 per cent recreation leave, eight per cent used accrued long service leave and three per cent were on worker's compensation. In some instances respondents had to use all their accrued leave when they took maternity leave.

Fifteen per cent of respondents did other paid work during their maternity leave. When asked if there were any difficulties with their employer during maternity leave about their job and possible return to work, six per cent of those in the private sector who took maternity leave had problems.

Return to Work After Maternity Leave

When asked when they decided whether to return to work after the birth, among those who broke their agreement and did not return to work (that is 27 per cent of those who took maternity leave), 13 per cent had never intended returning to work, 27 per cent made their decision not to return soon after the birth, and 37 per cent made their decision when the leave was about to expire.

Seventy-three per cent of those who took maternity leave returned to work after their leave: sixty-five per cent returned to the same employer; eight per cent (nine cases) returned to work, but to a different employer. The reasons given by those who returned to a different employer were in the main to work shorter hours (in five cases); two found jobs they preferred more; one was dismissed.

The majority of maternity leave takers (63%) were satisfied with the amount of time they had off; 35 per cent would have liked more time. When asked why they had returned to work at that time, the main reasons given were 'for the money' (57%); 19 per cent said it was because they enjoyed working; eight per cent felt able to cope with work and career again; six per

cent to continue with their career; four per cent because leave had expired.

For those who did not return to work after their maternity leave, the reasons given were that they had no intention of working while their child was young (47%); 41 per cent had partners who preferred them not working; 47 per cent mentioned breastfeeding; 19 per cent felt there was not an economic need to work; 22 per cent gave the cost of child care as the reason and 19 per cent mentioned not being able to find suitable child care; 16 per cent felt it was too far to travel to work. However, all but one of these thirty women intend returning to the workforce in the future.

Whereas 73 per cent of those who took maternity leave were working full time (defined here as 35 hours or more) before the birth among those who returned to work after the birth only 44 per cent were working full time.

The reasons why those women who did not formally take maternity leave, took that course was discussed previously. Looking at what these women did, the majority, as one would expect, resigned from the job (71 per cent of eligible women compared to 51 per cent of those who did not qualify for maternity benefits). However, 22 per cent resigned with an informal option to return after the birth (16 per cent of those who were eligible but did not take leave and 31 per cent of those who were not eligible).

Table 11: Return to work after the birth in the private sector

	Had Maternity Leave (*n* = 111) %	*No Maternity Leave* (*n* = 248) %	*Ineligible* (*n* = 159) %	*Total* (*n* = 518) %
No return	27	58	47	48
Returned to same employer	65} }73	23} }42	30} }54	34
Returned to different employer	8}	19}	24}	18

As Table 11 illustrates, a substantial number of women who did not take maternity leave returned to their previous employer. This informal agreement is assumed to be effective in most cases judging from the few negative comments on the questionnaires. In one instance however, a woman was told she could return but when she contacted her old employer she was not given employment:

> 'My employer said she would re-employ me, but turned me down when I went back after working for her for seven years.'

A small proportion were dismissed or retrenched as discussed earlier and nine per cent took other leave.

Nearly three quarters of those who took formal maternity leave returned to work, but only 42 per cent of those who were eligible but did not take it. Of those who were working casually or who had worked insufficient time with their employer 54 per cent returned to work after the birth. Twenty-three per cent of those who did not take up the maternity leave option returned to the same employer and 30 per cent of those who failed to qualify for maternity leave returned to their old employer (see Table 11).

Figure 2 illustrates a comparison of the three different maternity leave status groups in the private sector in relation to staying in the workforce prior to the birth and returning to the workforce after the birth. Concentrating on the pre-birth period, it can be seen that women who do not take maternity leave are more likely to leave work earlier in the pregnancy than those who do take maternity leave; 59 per cent are working up until the last six weeks before the EDC compared to 38 per cent of those who were eligible but did not take leave and 29 per cent of those who were ineligible; 88 per cent of those who take maternity leave worked up to 7–12 weeks before the birth compared to 66 per cent of those who did not take maternity leave and 58 per cent of those who did not qualify. While women who take maternity leave are more likely to work until later in their pregnancy, among those who do return to work, the majority return forty weeks after the birth. Women who were ineligible for leave return to work earlier if they did return, although fewer ineligible women returned to work overall.

Reasons for Returning or Not Returning to Work

Among the three groups, irrespective of maternity leave status, the main reason for returning to work was financial, and the next most important reason given was an enjoyment of work (see Table 12). Very few women said 'continuing a career' was the main reason for returning to work. Ten per cent specified other reasons as their main reason, usually that their employer had contacted them and asked them to return; their replacement had left or been unsatisfactory; and in some cases, a position was available with hours that would suit them, or a casual or temporary position for which they had been waiting was available. Some women stated they were just lonely for company and did not like being at home out of the workforce. In other instances partners had become unemployed or were in jobs which were not secure so the family felt economically vulnerable.

As Table 13 indicates, the major reason for not returning to work after the birth was that women had no intention of working while their child was very young. Forty-seven per cent of those who took maternity leave stated this, and 64 per cent of those who qualified but did not take maternity leave. This suggests that women may not take up the maternity leave option because they want to remain out of the workforce while their child is

young. Breastfeeding was the next most common reason. Other major influences were partners who preferred their wives not to work and the feeling that there was no economic necessity to be in the workforce. These reasons are consistent with the work–family values of many women and reflect their conflict over working and motherhood.

Table 12: Main reasons for returning to work: women in the private sector

Reason	*(n = 261)* %
Needed the money	56
Enjoy working	18
Believed I could cope	6
Continue career	5
Found appropriate child care	3

Table 13: Reasons for not returning to work: women in the private sector

	Had Maternity Leave (n = 32) %	*No Maternity Leave (n = 149)* %	*Ineligible (n = 78)* %	*Total (n = 259)* %
Never intended to work while children young	47	64	69	73
Don't intend returning to work at all	3	7	5	6
No suitable child care	19	17	28	21
Cost of child care	22	20	22	21
Breastfeeding	47	50	44	48

The views of women who did not take maternity leave although eligible range from the very conservative traditional responses about mothers not working to expressions of how they felt cheated at missing out on taking maternity leave. Others were ambivalent about leaving their children even though they would like to be in the workforce.

> 'I disagree with the idea of maternity leave — if you decide to have a child you forfeit your employment and devote your time to your child. If you can't afford to do that, don't have children. I didn't have

maternity leave because I believe I did not deserve it. Leave your position for someone else who needs it.'

'I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to be able to work for my husband's business from home. It breaks the monotony of household and mothering routines. But I have never worked outside the home since my child was born, as I don't believe in having children to have them minded or brought up by someone else. In other words I would not be working if I could not work from home.'

One out of five women who did not return to work believed that there was no suitable child care available, and one in five believed child care was too expensive. An examination of the proportion of a woman's income paid in child care (see page 77) by those who did return to the workforce after the birth suggests that, for women on low incomes, cost of childcare seems a valid reason for staying out of the workforce during the preschool years, particularly where there is more than one preschool child.

Eight per cent of women had not been able to change from full to part-time work. An examination of the preferred working arrangements for women discussed later in this report shows that there is strong preference for part-time work by women who have preschool children.

Six per cent had travel difficulties and found they were too far away from their job. This is consistent with findings by one of the major banks in a recent study of maternity leave takers, that women with preschool children prefer part time work and working close to home (personal communication). Six per cent of women could not get the job they wanted and three per cent were unable to find work.

Nine per cent of women gave other reasons — some were pregnant again, some had gone into business for themselves, and others expressed concern over combining motherhood and work.

4

OVERVIEW OF MATERNITY LEAVE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Forty-one per cent of respondents who were employed during their 1983–84 pregnancy were employed in the public sector. The breakdown of public sector employment was as follows:

Public sector respondents: by employer type

	%	*n*
Australian Public Service	16	59
Commonwealth Statutory Authorities	12	42
State Government (inc. State Authorities)	71	255
Local Government Authority	1	5

For the purposes of this study the Australian Public Service and Commonwealth Statutory Authorities were combined in the analysis, and due to small numbers the local government category was dropped from further analysis.

Overall, 76 per cent of women employed in the public sector took maternity leave, 10 per cent were eligible but did not take leave and 14 per cent did not meet the eligibility criteria (see Table 14). Of the 87 women who did not take maternity leave, 35 were eligible but did not take up the leave option. These women stated that their main reasons for not taking leave were that they wanted to give up work (51%); felt that they would find their job too demanding (46%); wanted to work less hours (20%). Of the 52 women who did not qualify for maternity leave 48 per cent resigned, 14 per cent resigned with an option to return, 6 per cent were asked to leave or retrenched (3 cases) and 23 per cent took other leave.

72

Table 14: Use of maternity leave in Commonwealth and State governments

	Federal Govt	*State Government*		*Total*
		Paid	*Unpaid*	
	%	%	%	%
Took maternity leave	80	76	72	76
No maternity leave	6	11	13	10
Not eligible maternity leave	14	13	16	14

Maternity Leave Conditions

There is high use of maternity leave in both federal and State governments (see Table 14). It is interesting to note that the availability of paid maternity leave appears not to significantly increase the take-up of maternity leave. In Australia, until recently (including at the time of this survey), three major types of maternity leave conditions were available in the public sector:

1. maternity leave with periods of paid and unpaid leave (as offered by the federal government and the Victorian State government);
2. conditional paid and unpaid component maternity leave, the condition being that employees must return to the workforce after leave for a period of time to receive payment (as offered in New South Wales);
3. unpaid maternity leave for a twelve month period (similar to the conditions available in the private sector).

There appears to be no difference in use of maternity leave overall between public servants with a paid component to their leave and those without a paid component.

Looking at the three different types of maternity leave provisions throughout Australia, the following analysis (see Table 15) groups the State public sector sample into three leave provision types. Group 1 includes those with paid and unpaid components without obligations to return to employment to receive payment. Group 2 includes those with provision for paid and unpaid components but with obligation to return to work for a certain period to receive payment. Group 3 includes those where unpaid leave only was available. The following rates for each group were examined:

- maternity leave use rates
- retention in workforce after maternity leave
- resignations within eighteen months of the birth after return to work.

The table shows no significant difference in the percentage of employees taking maternity leave under these three different maternity leave conditions.

Table 15: Use of maternity leave and retention in the workforce of State public sector women: by ML provision groups

ML Provision Groups	*Use of Maternity Leave*		*Retention in Workforce*		*Still in Workforce 18 Months after Birth*	
	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*
Group 1	78	60	68	41	90	37
Group 2	75	68	90	61	88	54
Group 3	72	61	67	42	90	38

Retention rates after maternity leave are significantly higher for Group 2, where there is an obligation to return to work to receive payment for maternity leave.

There is no significant difference between the three groups when looking at the percentage still in the workforce eighteen months after the birth. Nor are there significant differences in the numbers who return and drop out of the workforce within six months. However the higher rate of return for those who have to return to work to receive payment suggests that this requirement may increase retention rates.

It must be remembered that these analysis groupings are small in size and include departmental public servants as well as teachers and nurses working in public hospitals. Many employees who worked under Group 2 conditions (New South Wales public servants) were annoyed at being required to return to work to receive payment. There would be no justification for withholding maternity leave benefits if paid leave was introduced to alleviate the substantial drop in income suffered when women leave the workforce to give birth. However, if the benefit is seen as a reward and enticement to return to the workforce and to increase retention, it appears to have some merit.

Occupational Structure of Respondents

In an earlier chapter it was shown that sector of employment was the major determinant of taking maternity leave. However, the structure of the female labor force in Australia differs markedly between the public and private sectors. The majority of women with higher education or professional or para-professional status are employed in the public sector. An examination of the female labour force in federal and State spheres in this sample, as Table 16 illustrates, indicates that their respective structures differ markedly

Table 16: Industry, occupational classification and educational levels of respondents in federal and State government employment (a)

	Federal (n = 98) %	*State (n = 255)* %	*Total (n = 350)* %
Industry Classification			
Public Administration	34	8	16
Finance, Business, Property	14	3	6
Communication	17	–	5
Community Service (inc. Health, Education)	24	86	68
Other	11	3	5
Occupational Status			
Managerial, Professional	17	49	43
Para-professional	5	20	16
Clerical	72	17	32
Sales, Service	3	4	4
Manual	2	4	4
Education Level			
4th form or less	39	20	23
5th form	14	10	11
6th form	26	17	19
Tertiary	21	58	47

Note: (a) ABS figures for all Australian female workforce participation in the public sector closely matches these figures.

in line with their different functions, for example, health, education and community service are run by State government services.

A third of respondents working for the Australian Public Service and federal Statutory Authorities were employed in public administration compared to 8 per cent of women in State governments. Seventeen per cent were employed by the federal government in communications, that is Telecom and Australia Post, and just over one fifth in the community service sector. However, in State governments, 86 per cent of respondents were employed in the community service sector, since social welfare, education and health are predominantly state government functions.

The large number of female employees in the community service area accounts for the high number of women in managerial/professional occupation classifications in State governments (49%). These occupations are predominantly teaching, social work, and welfare work. The 20 per cent employed in para-professional occupational classifications in the State government sector would largely be nurses. The largest female occupational group in the federal government is the clerical category with 72 per cent of females employed as clerks, clerical assistants and keyboard operators, com-

pared to 17 per cent in State governments. This difference in occupational structure is reflected in the education levels of respondents; one fifth in the federal government have tertiary qualifications compared to 58 per cent in State governments.

Retention in Workforce After Maternity Leave

Overall rates of return to work after the birth for women in the three main occupational groupings in the public sector are similar (see Table 17). Three quarters of those in managerial and professional occupations returned to work (a proportion which may increase for the State government sector, because teachers in most States have additional parental or nurturing leave which lasts several years after their maternity leave period). There is almost complete return to the labour force after maternity leave by those in para-professional occupations in both federal and State governments. A third of clerical workers in the public sector fail to return after maternity leave.

Table 17: Retention rates among maternity leave takers in the public sector by occupational status

Occupation	*Percentage Returning From Maternity Leave*	
	Federal %	*State* %
Managerial/Professional	75	74
Para-professional	100	97
Clerical	67	67
Overall	69	76

There are differences in leave taking and return to work between the federal and State governments as Table 18 shows. In addition to taking maternity leave, 79 per cent of women employed by the federal government took additional leave, as did 41 per cent of those working for State governments. Eighty-nine per cent of those working in the federal sphere took recreation leave, 57 per cent took sick leave, 44 per cent took leave without pay (this figure is rather dubious, as some employees misunderstood the meaning of maternity leave and assumed it refers only to the paid component of their leave. This is therefore likely to be an over-estimate of additional unpaid leave). Twenty-seven per cent took long service leave suggesting that they had been employed for considerable lengths of time in the public sector, which allows portability of maternity leave across depart-

ments, an advantage private sector women do not share. In the State governments, 61 per cent took recreation leave, 25 per cent took sick leave, 33 per cent mentioned leave without pay and 17 per cent took long service

Table 18: Maternity leave in all public sectors (maternity leave takers only)

	Maternity Leave Takers	
	Federal (*n* = 78) %	*State* (*n* = 189) %
LENGTH OF ML TAKEN		
1-12 Weeks	5	1
13-26 Weeks	19	16
27-52 Weeks	56	51
53 Weeks plus	19	31
TOOK ADDITIONAL LEAVE	79	41
TYPE OF ADDITIONAL LEAVE		
Sick Leave	57	25
Recreation Leave	89	61
Long Service Leave	27	17
Leave Without Pay	44	33
DID PAID WORK WHILE ON ML	7	18
DIFFICULTIES ABOUT JOB & RETURN	9	9
	Returnees to Work	
	(*n* = 54) %	(*n* = 143) %
ML TAKERS WHO RETURNED TO WORK	69	76
RETURNEES — WHO WANTED MORE TIME OFF WORK	53	36
MAIN REASONS FOR RETURNING TO WORK AT THAT TIME:		
Needed Money	50	47
Leave Expired	17	18
Enjoy Working	12	18
Found Appropriate Child Care	6	2
Career	–	4
HOURS WORKED DURING PREGNANCY:		
1-19 hours	5	7
20-34 hours	4	22
35 hours +	91	72
HOURS WORKED AFTER ML		
1-19 hours	13	29
20-34 hours	9	26
35 hours +	78	45

leave. The amount of additional leave taken is much greater among federal government employees.

Of those who took maternity leave in the federal government, 69 per cent completed their contract and returned to work, 31 per cent took maternity leave but did not return to work. In State governments, 76 per cent of those who took maternity leave returned and 24 per cent had not returned to employment eighteen months after the birth of their child in May 1984.

Although over two-thirds of federal government employees had returned to work after taking their maternity leave, when surveyed only 57 per cent of them were still in the workforce, a drop of 12 per cent. Of State government employees who had taken maternity leave, 76 per cent stated they had returned to work, but at the time of the survey only 69 per cent were currently in the workforce, a drop of seven per cent. This finding suggests that there is a small proportion of women who return after maternity leave but leave some time later. Individual cases reveal that the reasons for this include a shift due to husband's job, the cost of child care, or another pregnancy.

Seven per cent of those working for the federal government did paid work while on maternity leave compared to 18 per cent working for the State governments. However, for teachers on maternity or family leave in Victoria and New South Wales (and this may apply in other States as well) it is possible to work as casual teachers while on leave. Also nursing is an occupation where casual work and agency work is readily available and is used by women on leave. Often women on maternity leave are requested to come in to do relieving work.

There is no difference between federal and State employees in the frequency of maternity leave usage. Just over seventy per cent of women working in both the federal and State government sectors have taken maternity leave once, around one in four have taken it twice, and 1 and 2 per cent have taken maternity leave three times. The fears, often expressed by employers, that employees exploit maternity leave and take it four and five times seem somewhat exaggerated, although there are several cases in this study of women taking maternity leave several times. Some respondents had returned to work and were on maternity leave again at the time of interview. These instances were rare occurrences in this study and tended to occur among public sector employees.

Reasons for Returning or Not Returning to Work

The reasons given for returning to work in the public sector indicate that in both the federal and State government around half return to work mainly for financial reasons. Seventeen per cent in the federal sphere and 18 per cent working for State governments said the main reason was that their leave

had expired. Women employed by State governments were more likely to say that they returned because they enjoy working (18% compared to 12% of federal employees).

The reasons given for not returning after maternity leave were very similar to those given by private sector women. The main reason for all government employees in both spheres was that they had no intention of working when their child was young (75% of federal employees and 57% of State employees). The next most common reason given by about half of the respondents was breastfeeding. State government employees were more likely to give reasons such as 'my partner prefers me not to work', or 'there is no economic need to work' — both around 25 per cent compared to 13 and 17 per cent of federal government employees.

Breastfeeding has often been given by women in this survey as a reason not to take maternity leave or not to return to work. This category was included in the questionnaire because the maternity leave provisions in Australia do not conform with those of ILO Convention No. 103 which state that women should be provided with nursing breaks when they return to the workforce. The desire to breastfeed is often cited in conjunction with not intending to work while a child is young, and by women who have traditional values concerning work and family commitments. It therefore needs to be interpreted with caution. However, there were examples in this survey of women struggling to organize their working hours around breastfeeding schedules:

> 'Difficult organizing shifts around breastfeeding. There's no work creche and so acute separation from child (possibly spend meal breaks with child).'
>
> 'Paid maternity leave is lovely but it should be available to all or none. Also leave should be extendible for long term breastfeeding convenience.'
>
> 'More of the maternity leave, if not all, should be paid to allow mothers to take at least 6–12 months to breastfeed their babies and form a bond with them.'
>
> 'I think an employee should be able to get paid maternity leave and be able to go back part time after six months. I still breastfeed at nine months. When I went back to work I breastfed morning, tea-time and before bed, that is, I dropped the lunchtime feed. My mother babysat so it worked quite well.'

Women working for the federal government are far more likely than their State government counterparts to give child care costs (26 and 15 per cent respectively) or the unavailability of suitable child care (29 and 12 per cent respectively) as reasons for not returning to work.

Federal government employees are more likely to state that the reasons they have not returned to employment is that they are unable to change from full-time to part-time employment (29% stated this) as opposed to only 16 per cent of state sector employees. However, 87 per cent of federal government and 91 per cent of State government employees plan to return to the workforce at some stage.

When asked about preferred working arrangements, among those who had worked during their pregnancy and had taken maternity leave, three quarters of all public service employees stated a preference for working part time; 24 per cent of state and 16 per cent of federal government employees would prefer not to work. A very small number want to work full time at this stage of their lives when the child is under two years old.

In the federal government 68 per cent of employees remain in the workforce up until the last six weeks before EDC, compared to 53 per cent of women employed by State governments. The timing of the return to work is similar in both groups. As Figure 3 shows (p 32) around 20 per cent of maternity leave takers are back in the workforce 24 weeks after the birth. Of those employed by the federal Government fifty-two weeks after the birth 66 per cent had returned compared to 68 per cent of those in State government. Seventy per cent had returned to the federal government workforce eighteen months after the birth, and 75 per cent to State government employment. This rate of return to work for State employees will probably increase because teachers may have taken parental or nurturing leave, which can be of several years duration and up to seven years in Victoria.

There is a popular belief that when paid maternity leave provisions are available, women will take maternity leave whether or not they intend to return to the workforce in order to receive payment. In some instances, where paid maternity leave benefits apply and women have earned the right to these, there is no doubt an element of truth in this belief. However, it may also be that women, in order to keep their options open, take maternity leave even though they may be uncertain about where or not to return to the workforce. In view of the uncertainty about the health of mother and child and in times of economic uncertainty, such an approach seems to have much to recommend it.

Maternity Leave in the Teaching and Nursing Professions

Before concluding this discussion of maternity leave in the public sector, it should be noted that a large proportion of the sample employed in the public sector belonged to two occupational categories, namely teachers and nurses. There were 110 teachers, and 47 nurses. This means that 75 per cent of those employed in managerial and professional occupations were teachers, and 84 per cent in the para-professional occupational category were nurses. Teachers employed in government schools in Australia usually have far better maternity leave conditions than any other occupational group. Comments both from the employee and employer surveys were often critical of the maternity leave conditions for teachers which they considered were unfair compared to the rest of the workforce.

Maternity Leave in the Teaching Profession

A distinctive characteristic of the teaching profession is the level of unionization. In this study 92 per cent of teachers employed in government schools and 56 per cent of teachers in the private sector were members of unions.

In the public sector 83 per cent of teachers took maternity leave. Of the remaining 17 per cent, 80 per cent were ineligible and 20 per cent (four cases) did not take up the maternity leave option.

Of teachers employed during their pregnancy in 1983–84, 56 per cent were having their first pregnancy, 32 per cent their second, and 12 per cent their third. Ninety-one per cent of those with their first pregnancy took maternity leave, 80 per cent of those having their second, and 50 per cent of those having their third.

Seventy-five per cent of those who had been employed during their pregnancy were back in the workforce at the time of the survey, eighteen months after the birth. Of those who had not yet returned or did not return, 97 per cent expected to return to the workforce.

Sixty-eight per cent of public sector teachers had taken maternity leave once, 21 per cent twice, and 3 per cent three times. Eight per cent had never taken maternity leave.

It can be seen that maternity leave for teachers is the norm not the exception as is often the case in many other occupational categories. Teachers have a higher rate of maternity leave than any other occupational group and they have a very high retention rate in the workforce after the birth.

Most teachers, like the rest of the sample, would prefer to be working part-time when they have eighteen-month-old children. Only five per cent prefer to work full time, 78 per cent would prefer part-time work and 16 per cent would prefer not to be in the workforce. Working hours of teachers before and after the birth are shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Public sector teachers: working hours per week prior to and after the birth

Hours Worked per Week	*Before Birth* %	*After Birth* %
1-19 hours	5	31
20-34 hours	24	26
35 hours plus	71	44

Just over 71 per cent worked more than 35 hours per week prior to the birth; after the birth this dropped to 44 per cent. A substantial increase is shown for those who worked 1–19 hours, from five to 31 per cent. Some States allow teachers to work in casual positions while on maternity or

parental leave, so this increase may be due to teachers who worked as casuals or as relieving teachers. More teachers than other occupational groups took paid work while on maternity leave; 24 per cent compared to the overall figure of 14 per cent for the whole maternity leave sample.

Maternity Leave in the Nursing Profession

The employees' sample contained 69 nurses who were employed during pregnancy. Thirty per cent had been employed in the private sector and 70 per cent in public hospitals. In the following analysis public and private sector nurses are combined due to small numbers in each category and also because conditions vary less for nurses than for teachers in the public and private sectors.

Fifty-seven per cent of the nurses in the sample were members of unions, although their unions were not the main source of their information about maternity leave. Information was gleaned from workmates in 47 per cent of cases, employers in 26 per cent of cases, and only six per cent learned about maternity leave from unions. Eleven per cent had no information about maternity leave.

Forty-four per cent of nurses took maternity leave, 32 per cent were eligible but did not take it, and 25 per cent were ineligible. It was found that nurses who worked in larger hospitals were more likely to take maternity leave.

Fifty-one per cent of nurses were having their first child, 41 per cent their second child and 8 per cent their third or fourth child.

Use of maternity leave in the nursing profession took the following pattern — 38 per cent had had maternity leave once, 12 per cent had leave twice and 50 per cent had never had leave.

Of the 69 nurses in employment during their pregnancy, 78 per cent were back in the workforce at the time of the survey. Most (96%) were back in the nursing profession. Fifty per cent of nurses who were eligible for maternity leave but did not take it returned to different employers. This finding suggests that some nurses may not have taken up the maternity leave option because they wanted to change jobs, to get part-time work or work closer to home.

After the birth, among those who returned to nursing, 39 per cent worked in the private sector and 61 per cent in the public sector. There appears to be a slight shift of nurses out of the public health system, and it is possibly related to the availability of part-time and casual agency nursing.

Seventy-five per cent of nurses would prefer to work part time at this stage of their lives, and 24 per cent not to work at all. Less than two per cent would favour full-time employment.

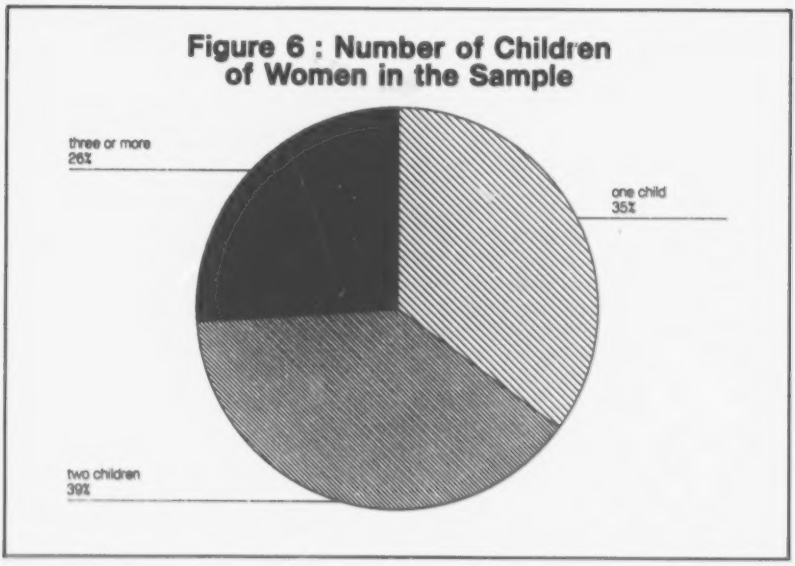


Figure 6 : Number of Children of Women in the Sample
three or more 26%
one child 35%
two children 39%

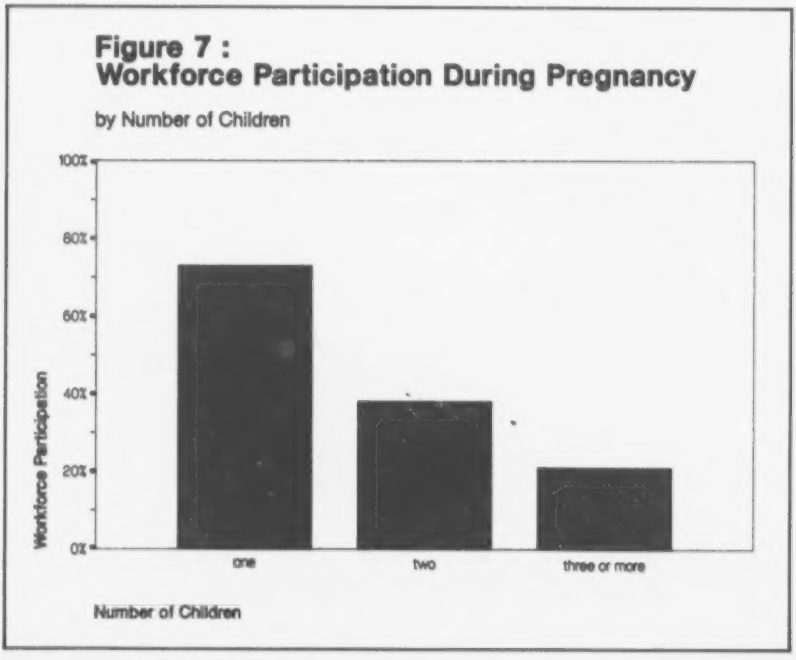


Figure 7 :
Workforce Participation During Pregnancy
by Number of Children
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Workforce Participation
one
two
three or more
Number of Children

84

5

DETERMINANTS OF RETURN TO EMPLOYMENT

As labour force participation rates differ markedly for women with and without children, it was expected that workforce participation rates of women who had their first birth in May 1984 would be greater than for women who were having second or later births. (A more detailed examination of retention rates for first-birth women will be made later.)

Figure 6 shows that in the total sample 35 per cent (n = 696) had one child, 39 per cent (n = 775) had two children and 26 per cent (n = 529) had three or more children. Figure 7 shows that the following proportions were in the labour force during pregnancy: 73 per cent of women who had their first child in May 1984; 38 per cent of women who had their second birth in May 1984; and 21 per cent who were having their third or later birth.

Concentrating on those in employment during pregnancy, fifty-five per cent of first-birth women, 64 per cent of second birth women and 72 per cent of women who had three or more children returned to the workforce. This means that a higher retention rate can be expected for women who return to work after their first birth and who continue to work in later pregnancies. Comparing the women in scope with those in the *total sample*, the picture looks somewhat different. Thirty-nine per cent of the total sample of first-birth women returned to the workforce after the pregnancy; 24 per cent of second-birth women; and 14 per cent of those who had three or more children.

Examination of maternity leave status by number of children revealed that 57 per cent of those in scope who took maternity leave were having a first child. The remaining 43 per cent were having their second or later pregnancy. However, the overall proportion of first-birth women in the total sample who took maternity leave was 31 per cent; 17 per cent were having a second birth, and seven per cent a third or later pregnancy.

As women are more likely to be in the labour force during first pregnancies, maternity leave provisions have greatest impact on the first pregnancy. Substantially fewer women were in the workforce after the first birth which is the major exit point; therefore, there were fewer women taking maternity

leave for second births. However, as the retention rates given above illustrate, women who have demonstrated commitment to workforce participation by returning after the first birth are more likely to return after second or subsequent births. From an employer's point of view, women with children who return to work are likely to remain in the workforce. The problem for employers is to retain women in the workforce after the first birth.

In order to identify the determinants of returning to the labour force after the birth of a child, analysis was restricted to married women who had been in the workforce in 1983–84 during their first pregnancy. Reasons for restricting the analysis to married women were that 92 per cent of the sample were married, and the availability of social security benefits is likely to lower retention rates for women who were not married at the time of the birth. Women who had partners and were living in de facto relationships (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6) were excluded from this analysis as the level or presence of economic support by partners is difficult to assess in the data available.

The main objectives of this section are to:

- look at the change in workforce participation among married women before and after the first child.
- identify the determinants and correlates of returning to the workforce after the first birth among married women.
- look at the type of child care arrangements made by women who return to work and the cost of that care as a proportion of respondents' incomes.

Workforce Participation Before and After the First Child

Prior to becoming parents young couples tend to lead very similar lives. Usually both are in the workforce (prior to the first birth 79 per cent of women worked, usually up to the last few months), so they are accustomed to living on two incomes.

Of wage-earners during their first pregnancy, Figure 8 indicates that 75 per cent of women continue to work up until 12 weeks before the birth, and 46 per cent are still in the workforce at six weeks prior to the birth. Looking at the right hand side of Figure 8, that is after the birth, it can be seen that 54 per cent have returned to the workforce eighteen months after the birth.

Figure 9 shows before and after birth workforce participation for high-status and low-status occupations (high-status women being those employed in managerial, professional or para-professional occupations). There is a tendency for women in lower-status occupations to leave work earlier than those with higher status. After the birth, however, more significant differences emerge, with 75 per cent of women with higher status occupations back in the workforce eighteen months after the birth compared to 47 per cent of women with lower status.

Figure 8 :
Exit & Return to Employment

by Number of Children

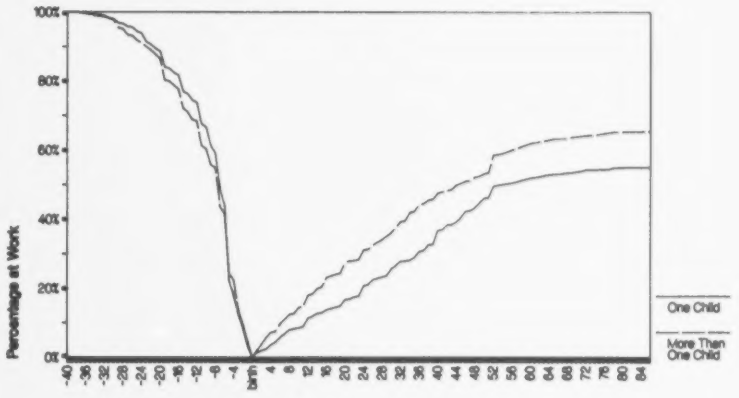
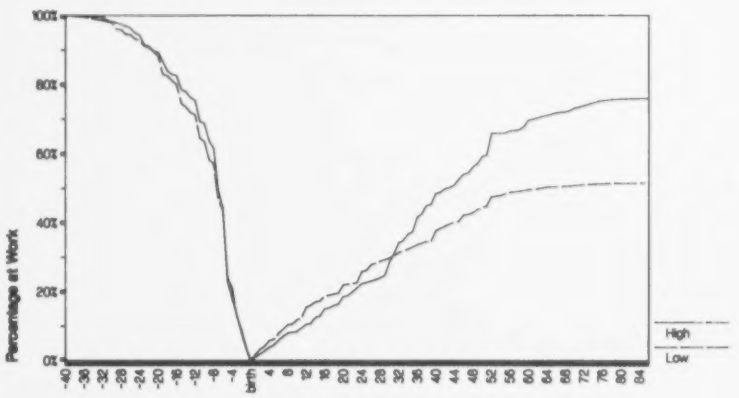


Figure 9 :
Exit & Return to Employment

by Occupational Status



Women are more likely to be in full time employment prior to the birth of the first child than after the birth. Seventy-three per cent of those working during pregnancy worked full time and 27 per cent part time. The advent of a child has a major effect on women's lifestyles, not just in terms of adjusting to the physical and psychological changes of becoming a parent, but also because women leave the workforce and the subsequent drop in income creates financial pressure. This not only imposes strains on husbands who have to take over sole responsibility for being breadwinners, but it also affects women's self definition. Women become financially dependent often for the first time in their marriages. As one woman expressed it: 'A working woman who suddenly becomes a full-time mother feels financially helpless.'

Of the total sample, 56 per cent were not in the workforce eighteen months after the birth of the first child, compared to 21 per cent who did not work prior to the birth. Of those who worked during the pregnancy, 44 per cent returned to the workforce, 36 per cent to full-time work and 64 per cent to part-time work (see Figure 10 in Chapter 7). Comparing rates of full- and part-time work during pregnancy, this represents a substantial drop in full-time work.

Changes in Household Income Before and After the First Child

The rates of workforce participation and the large numbers shifting from full-time to part-time work explain the drop in household income of couples with children. Table 20 indicates that by eighteen months after the birth the proportion of gross household incomes under $20 000 increased by 8 per cent, and the proportion of household incomes between $20 000 and $30 000 rose from 24 to 39 per cent.

The median income difference in household income is −$6000. The size of the difference between household income before and after the birth depends on whether the respondent returned to work. The mean difference for those households where the wife did not return to the workforce is −$8000, whereas for those where the wife returned to work the mean difference is −$1468. Sixty-six per cent of couples were worse off financially after the birth of the first child. This is due to the large proportion of women who do not return to work within eighteen months of the birth, and the number of women who switch to part-time work when they return.

89

Table 20: Changes in household income before and after the birth of the first child

	Household Income	
	before birth %	*18 months after birth* %
Under $20 000	11	19
$20 000–$29 000	24	39
$30 000 +	65	42

Influences on Return to Work

Research on the determinants and correlates of continued labour force participation after the first birth (Mott & Shapiro 1983, Greenstein 1986, McLaughlin 1982, Waite, Haggstrom & Kanouse 1985) has consistently indicated that:

1. High education and occupational status are significantly related to returning to work among women. Those with high earning potential and career opportunities are more likely to return to the workforce after the first child is born. The costs of not working are perceived to outweigh the benefits of full-time mothering, there is more to lose by taking time out of the workforce in career terms, and there is a tendency to view employment and childrearing as complementary rather than mutually exclusive activities.
2. Having a husband with a high income has been found to be both positively and negatively related to continued labour force participation. As women with high earning potential are likely to be married to men with high earning potential, this may account for discrepancies in findings.
3. A commitment to work, indicated by working up until the last weeks before the birth or by the number of years spent in the workforce, is related to continuing in the workforce. The argument is that those who have more experience in the labour force are more likely to want to be in paid employment and to value it more highly.
4. Women's values about work commitment and combining career and motherhood are found to contribute to explaining return to the workforce after the birth of the first child.

To analyse some of the determinants of returning to work in this sample two measures of work commitment were examined: year commenced working for employer; and length of time the respondent continued in the workforce prior to the birth. It was expected that the longer the period of employment, the more likely the respondent is to return to work thus illustrating not only attachment to workforce participation but also attach-

ment to a particular employer. Also hypothesized was the closer to the birth a woman remains in the workforce, the more likely she is to return to work.

In previous research attitudinal measures associated with return to work have tended to measure work commitment and the conflict between motherhood and working. For this report, two scales were devised. The first, a three-item factor-based scale with an alpha of .71 measuring the mother–wife role versus working; the second, a three-item factor-based scale with an alpha of .76 which is more specifically related to measuring the mothering versus child care dilemma. (See Appendix 1 for details of items in these scales.)

It was felt that these two scales would give a measure of the role conflict women face over being a 'good mother', contributing economically to the household, and to maintaining a career. It was predicted that both scales would be related to workforce participation, that is, regarding career and motherhood as complementary would be related to returning to work and believing that working and child care is not detrimental to children would be related to returning to work.

In order to explain return to the workforce within eighteen months after birth of a first child among this sample of married women and to identify the determinants of return to work, the following hypotheses (based on previous research findings) were tested in a multiple regression.

Demographic and Economic Variables

- respondent's occupational status will be positively related to workforce participation after the first birth.
- high education will be related to workforce participation after the first birth.
- respondent's income during pregnancy (earning potential) will be positively related to continuing in the workforce.
- husband's income will not be independently related to continued workforce participation. When occupational status and wife's earning potential are controlled, there will be a negative relationship between husband's income and workforce participation, with women returning to the workforce if their husband's income does not provide sufficient economic security.

Work Commitment

- year commenced working for last employer will be negatively related to returning to the workforce, that is, the longer the time in employment the more likely the respondent is to return to the workforce.
- length of time before the birth that the respondent gave up working will be negatively related to returning to the workforce, that is the shorter the period between leaving work before the birth the more likely the respondent is to return to the workforce.

Work–family Values

- regarding career and motherhood as complementary will be related to returning to the workforce
- seeing child care as not detrimental to children will be related to returning to the workforce.

Table 21: Determinants of returning to employment after the first birth among married women: multiple regression analysis

Variable	*R*	*BETA*	*R2*
DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES			
Husband's income	− .04	− .14**	
Occupation (High)	+ .18	+ .28**	
Respondent's income during pregnancy	+ .11	+ .11*	
			R2 = .12
WORK COMMITMENT			
Weeks before birth remained at job	− .18	− .16**	
Years with employer	+ .08	+ .11*	
			R2 = .05
WORK–FAMILY VALUES			
Wife/Mother vs working	− .29	− .04	
Child care vs 'mothering'	− .42	− .32**	
			R2 = .10
TOTAL			R2 = .27

Note: Significance * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$

The demographic variables, the work commitment variables and the work–family values measures, were entered in the regression in three stages (see Table 21). The demographic variables accounted for 12 per cent of the variance. High earning potential and a high status occupation are significantly related to returning to work. Education was not significant (no doubt due to the high correlation between respondents occupational status and education) so was dropped from the equation. Husband's income is not independently related to returning to the workforce, however, when respondent's income and occupational status are controlled for having a husband with a low income increases the wife's chances of returning to the workforce.

Both the work commitment measures are significantly related to returning to work, that is, staying in the workforce until just before the birth, and having worked for the last employer for a long period. Together these contributed five per cent of the variance.

In relation to work–family values, while the attitude scale relating to wife/mother role versus career was highly correlated with returning to work, when the other variables were controlled for in the equation the beta

dropped to .04. This scale is correlated with respondent's occupation and education level and the second scale. Attitudinal factors concerning conflict over child care and working accounted for most of the variance; the amount of variance accounted for was 27 per cent.

Other variables looked at for inclusion in the regression were age of respondent, urban/rural differences, birthplace of mother, but these were dropped from the analysis as they were not significantly related to the dependent variable.

To sum up returning to the workforce is significantly related to:

- having a husband who earns a low income
- having a high status occupation (managerial, professional, para-professional)
- having high earning potential
- having worked up until just before the birth
- having been employed for a long period with the same employer (the average number of years in employment was five years)
- viewing child care as not detrimental to young children

A hypothetical portrait of a woman who returns to the labour force after the first birth reveals that she has high earning potential, and a high status managerial, professional or para-professional occupation. She stayed in the workforce until just before the birth of the child indicating a strong work commitment. She also has been employed with her employer for quite some time, most probably for five years. Her values concerning work and child care mean she is quite comfortable combining work and childrearing and does not see child care as detrimental to her child.

The analysis also provides evidence of another type of 'hypothetical woman' who returns to work. This woman is committed to workforce participation out of economic necessity because her husband has a low income.

The hypothetical portrait of the woman who does not return to the labour force after the first birth shows she is likely to have a lower status occupation, and consequently a low earning potential, while her husband will have a relatively higher income. She is likely to have dropped out of the workforce earlier in her pregnancy, and have not been employed with her employer for a great length of time. In other words, she is less attached to the workforce. She is likely to have strong negative views about child care and mothers of pre-schoolers being in the workforce.

Type and Costs of Child Care on Return to Work

Another factor in determining return to work after childbirth is the availability and cost of child care. The survey found that there was a high use of informal care (45%), that is care by relatives or friends, which was usually

unpaid (see Table 22). Thirty-two per cent of women used formal care only (that is child care centres or paid babysitters). Twenty-three per cent used a combination of formal and informal care.

Table 22: Child care used on return to workforce after first birth

	Respondents %
Type of Child Care Used (n = 263)	
Informal care (relatives, friends)	45
Formal care (centre or paid babysitter)	32
Combination of formal and informal	23
Use of Paid Care by Occupation	
Managerial, professional	74
Para-professional	54
Clerical	60
Sales and service	41
Manual	33 **
Proportion of Income Spent on Child Care by Occupation	
Total of all groups	18.6
Managerial, professional	10.8
Para-professional	18.2
Clerical	27.6
Sales and service	27.1**

Note: Significance * = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .001$

Women respondents often used several different types of child care for their eighteen-month-old child, in several instances up to four different types of care were used. An examination of those who use multiple types of care indicates that this was usually due to economic factors.

Among first-birth women for those who pay for child care, the average cost was 18.6 per cent of the woman's income. Examination of different occupational groups indicates significant differences between occupations. Women with professional or para-professional occupations paid proportionally less for child care than women in clerical, sales and service occupations; these groups paid over a quarter of their income in child care.

An analysis by occupational groups indicates that those with higher status occupations and incomes were more inclined to use paid care. Comments revealed that the cost and availability of child care is an issue in determining women's workforce participation after the first birth and also whether or not she works full- or part-time.

> 'I would like to work for more than a few hours a week, but my mother is unavailable for any more childminding and my pay (quite

> modest) would just cover private babysitting costs and nothing else.'
>
> 'I didn't return to work because of the cost of child care — almost all my wage would have been spent on child care.'
>
> 'I am at the moment desperately trying to find a job. Part-time work is what I would prefer but that would mean paying most, if not all, of my wages into day care.'
>
> 'More women would/could return to work if suitable close-by childminding was available.'

An examination of the cost of child care for all respondents who returned to the workforce and who paid for child care showed the average amount paid was 23 per cent of the respondent's income and seven per cent of the household income.

The cost of child care for respondents with two children rises to 25 per cent of the respondent's income. There are no significant differences between the different occupational groups as there were for respondents with one child only. This meant that women with two children spent approximately a quarter of their incomes on child care. As one respondent explained:

> 'Unfortunately I did not return to work after the second child was born. I was forced to resign because of the cost of child care. Almost all my wages would have been spent on child care. However I'm very grateful to my employer for being so understanding and not treating me as if I had abused the system of maternity leave.'

96

6

MATERNITY LEAVE EXPERIENCE OF SOLE PARENTS AND THOSE IN DE FACTO RELATIONSHIPS

In most instances women who give birth are married. However, women who have ex-nuptial children are likely to face greater economic hardship at the time of the birth and subsequently. Included here is a brief examination of respondents who were not married at the time of their pregnancy.

Financial support in the form of a special benefit is available for these women when they are required to leave just prior to the birth, and after the birth this benefit is replaced by supporting parents benefit if required.

This chapter now examines the characteristics and level of workforce participation both before and after the birth of women who were not married at the time of the survey.

Married women formed the majority of the sample; ninety-two per cent of respondents were married. The marital status of the remaining 168 who were not married at the time of the birth is shown in Table 23 together with an overview of other characteristics. Because the number of separated, divorced and widowed women in the sample was small, these categories were combined in the following analysis.

Demographic Characteristics

Those who were not married or living with husbands at the time of the birth tended overall to have lower education levels than the total sample of respondents: 67 per cent had fourth form or less compared to 48 per cent of women in the total sample. Fifty per cent of the total sample were in employment during their pregnancy compared to 45 per cent of those who were unmarried. Never married women in the sample were more likely to be in the workforce than separated, divorced or widowed women and those living in de facto relationships. This may be related to the fact that never married women were more likely to be having a first child than those living together or separated, divorced or widowed respondents.

Seventy-two per cent of the never married were having a first child compared to 44 per cent of those living in de facto relationships and 28 per cent of those separated, divorced and widowed. Some of those living in de facto relationships at the time of the birth may have been previously married.

Table 23: Characteristics of respondents who were never married, separated, divorced, widowed or living in de facto relationships at the time of the birth

	Never Married (n = 62) %	*Separated, Divorced Widowed* (n = 26) %	*Living De Facto* (n = 80) %	*Total* (n = 168) %
EDUCATION LEVEL				
4th Form or less	64	71	68	67
5th-6th Form	29	21	25	25
Tertiary	7	8	8	8
NUMBER OF CHILDREN				
1 Child	72	28	44	52
2 Children	18	35	40	30
3 + Children	10	18	21	18
WORKFORCE STATUS DURING PREGNANCY				
In paid employment	54	37	42	45
Not employed	46	63	58	55
CURRENTLY WORKING				
Yes	17	12	28	20
No	84	88	72	80
SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFICIARY				
Yes	90	85	35	37
No	10	15	65	63

Employment Status Before and After the Birth

After the birth, twenty-eight per cent of those who were living together at the time of the birth were in employment compared to 17 per cent of the never married and 12 per cent of the separated, divorced and widowed group.

98

At the time of the survey thirty-five per cent of those in de facto relationships were in receipt of some social security benefit or government assistance compared to 85 per cent of the separated, divorced and widowed group and 90 per cent of the never married group. The majority of those receiving social security assistance received the supporting parents benefit.

Respondents were asked for their preferred working arrangements. It was found that for those who were currently working 15 per cent would prefer full-time work, 70 per cent part-time work and 15 per cent would prefer not to work. Among those not in the labour force, 13 per cent would like full-time jobs, 67 per cent would like to work part time and only 23 per cent would prefer to remain out of the workforce. Most of those not in the labour force were in receipt of government assistance of some kind. This strong preference among non-employed women to have either full- or part-time jobs at this time of their lives when they had a child of eighteen months suggests that they would prefer not to be solely dependent on social security.

Turning now to those who were in the workforce during their pregnancy, compared to their married counterparts this group was far less likely to have had maternity leave, and more likely to have been ineligible for maternity leave. Twenty-eight per cent of those in the workforce during their pregnancy took maternity leave.

Partner Characteristics

Survey respondents were asked to give marital status at two different time points, at the time of the birth, and at the time of the interview. Very few had changed their marital status eighteen months later (118 of 168) that is, 70 per cent remained the same. However, 26 per cent of those who stated they were living in de facto relationships at the time of the birth had subsequently married, as well as three per cent of the never married.

Prior to the birth, 80 non-married respondents were partnered. At the time of interview, 71 were partnered. Of these, 45 had partners in full-time employment, six had partners in part-time work, one had a partner who was studying, 15 had unemployed partners, and two were with partners on pensions.

7

CURRENT AND PREFERRED EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WOMEN

It is at the time of the first birth that women usually start their pattern of interrupted workforce participation, either by moving in and out of the workforce or by shifting to part-time work. Statistics collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1987) demonstrate the dramatic increase in part-time work among female workers between 1966 and 1984. The problem with part-time work is that it is often casual work and the long-term implications for women entering the part-time casual workforce are probably not fully understood by many women.

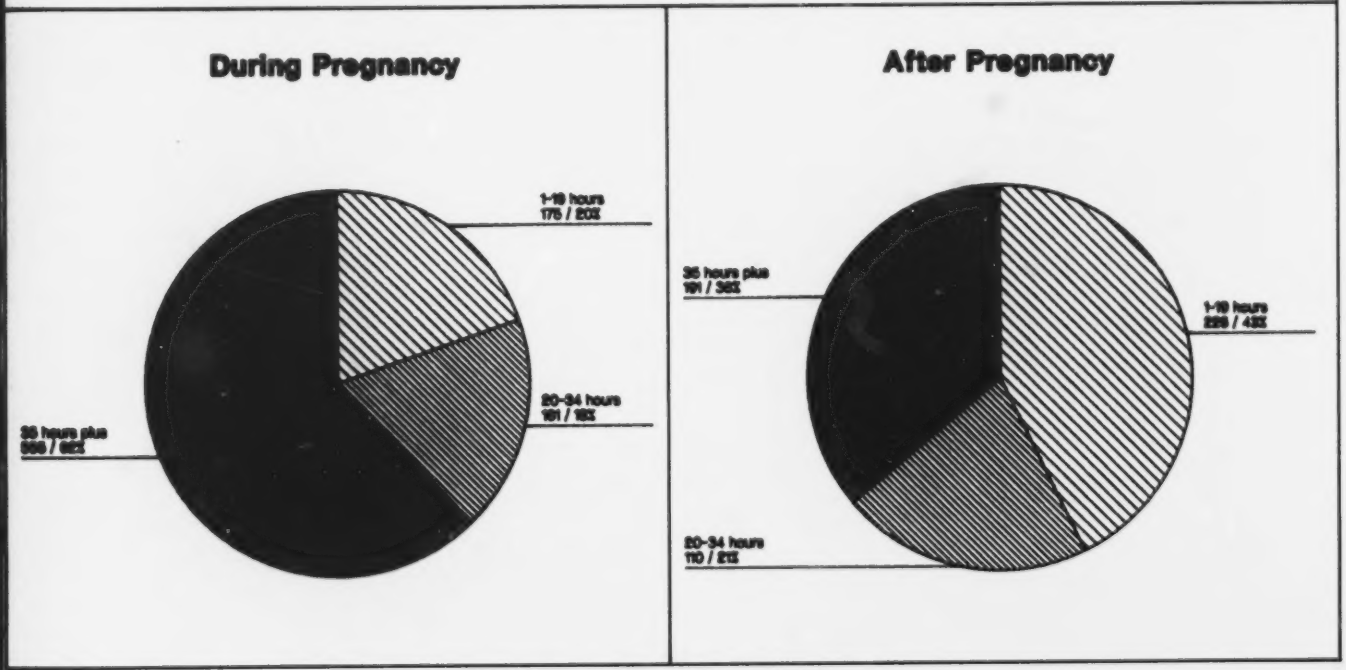
In order to meet their short-term needs of combining motherhood with workforce participation women enter the part-time, often casual, labour force and appear to be unaware of long-term consequences in terms of loss of future career prospects, employment benefits and earning potential. Research by Joshi (1984) and Funder (1986) has demonstrated the long-term effects of an interrupted workforce pattern due to childcare responsibilities on women's earning potential. It is not just moving out of the workforce that affects their future earning potential, but also the years spend in part-time work.

There is considerable concern and debate about part-time work and the increasing casualization of the workforce, and as women make up most of the part-time labour force, they are the most affected. For these reasons, these issues were included in this study.

Before the birth, sixty-two per cent of women in the sample were working full time (35 hours plus), 18 per cent 20–34 hours, and 20 per cent 1–19 hours. Two thirds of those working full time during their pregnancy were having a first birth. Eighteen months after the birth among those who returned to the labour force 36 per cent were employed full time, 21 per cent were working 20–34 hours and 43 per cent were employed 1–19 hours only (see Figure 10).

Around three-quarters of women in either part-or full-time employment would prefer to work part time (see Figure 11). For women who were not in the workforce, 47 per cent would prefer to remain not working, but 49

Figure 10 : Hours Worked During & After Pregnancy



per cent would prefer to have a part-time job. The survey found a preference for part-time work among women with pre-school children. Similar results were found in a recent survey on maternity leave in the Victorian public service (Wulff, 1987).

There is an expressed preference for part-time work at this stage of their lives among women who work full time and among those who are not in the workforce. Whether in fact these women would change their work status if given the opportunity of part-time work remains to be demonstrated. Nine out of ten women who had been employed during their pregnancy state that they intend to return to work in the future. It appears that in the interests of combining work and parenting women are jeopardizing their long-term career prospects by entering the part-time, often casual, labour force.

These results provide evidence of the need for part-time work for women during the childbearing years, and suggest that the availability of part-time work would lead to greater retention of women in the labour force after childbirth.

The New South Wales Public Service offers part-time return to the workforce for two years in its maternity leave conditions, and some evaluation of this scheme has been carried out. Preliminary findings (1981) indicate that part-time work following maternity leave slightly increases retention rates.

At first glance the offer of part-time return for a two year period is attractive in that it provides what women want and should lead to increased retention. One of the main problems, however, is the demographic reality that, in most instances, women will have two children several years apart, which means that employers will need to have long term goals when estimating retention rates. In the United States some maternity leave packages offered by individual corporations include part-time return for up to six months after maternity leave (Catalyst 1986), and this may be an approach to examine. Another strategy would be to create more part-time positions to enable job sharing during the childbearing years.

It would appear most women prefer combining motherhood and part-time work at this stage of their lives. This would enable them to spend time with their children, while contributing economically, and retaining a broader definition of themselves beyond motherhood. As one mother put it:

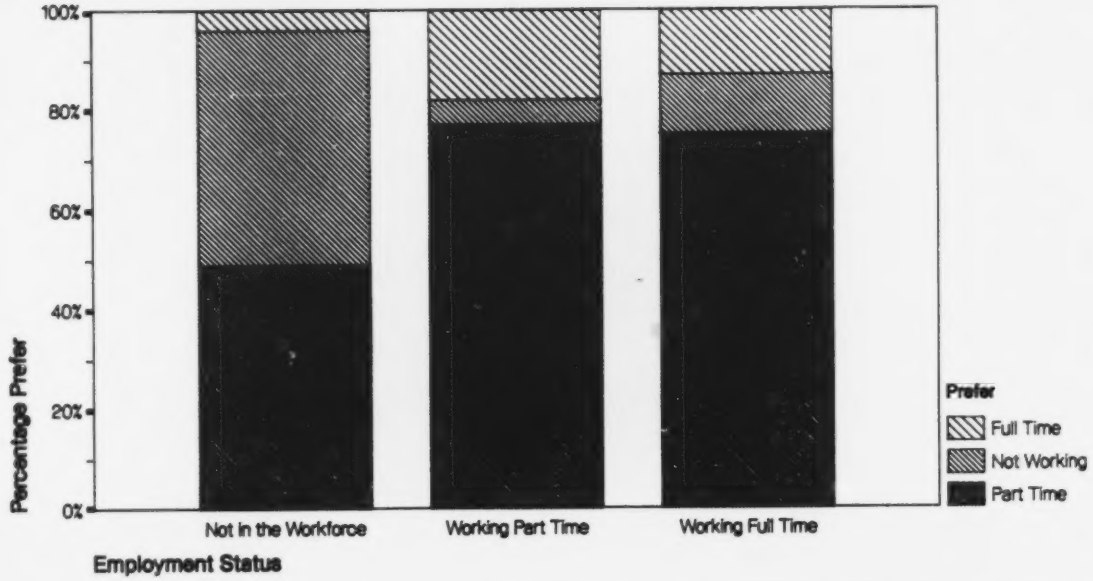
> 'Motherhood has been and still is fantastic. However I felt I wasn't in touch with the world staying at home all day talking to a baby. Since working again I feel that I'm a better mother because I am more confident and fulfilled and the small contribution I make to the family income takes a bit of pressure off my husband.'

It is estimated that a third of women in this study who were eligible for maternity leave were employed in casual positions. These women tended to be younger women in low skill jobs or women who already had a child prior to 1984.

Even among maternity leave takers there were some who stated that they

Figure 11 :
Preferred Employment Arrangements

by Current Employment Status



resigned their permanent position for a casual one. This trend towards dropping to part-time work is widespread in Australia.

When it comes to combining workforce participation and parenting the reality is that women do most of the accommodating, as the examples below illustrate:

> 'I did not want to work during the day while my child was young, therefore I found flexible evening work so my husband could take care of the child. I went back to work part time four months after the birth of my son. I returned to the same company which granted me my maternity leave. However, when my leave was up, I resigned and continued part time. It was always my intention to return to work after the birth of my baby. I had great difficulty returning to the workforce as I had a demanding position of senior secretary to one of the company's executive general managers and a director. The hours required to fulfill my necessary workload prior to my maternity leave had not decreased and my baby was a poor sleeper and suffered from colic for six months which meant I was lucky to get 2--3 hours sleep a night. I found this was not enough to enable me to cope with a full-time job. The company was very lenient and after six months transferred me to a less demanding position in an endeavour to retain my abilities. Now after eighteen months I have taken on a part-time position three days a week with the same company, which enables me to cope more with my home duties. I always wanted to pursue a career, but I am now finding that a few days working is enough to stimulate my brain and I have time to spend with my son which is more rewarding. My mother-in-law looks after him when I am at work. I feel that no one can take the place of a mother even though a husband may help. At critical times when baby is ill, it is only mum he wants. Even though both partners may have equally demanding positions, I feel the greater strain is placed on the wife particularly as she runs the household with all the associated chores as well.'
>
> 'I had difficulty in obtaining part-time work after maternity leave. I notified my employer before I commenced maternity leave that I wished to return part time not full time. This was still not possible even with twelve months' notice.'
>
> 'Maternity leave is an excellent idea as long as it is not abused. I also think that after maternity leave, part-time or shared work should be available to women.'

8

EMPLOYEES' VIEWS OF MATERNITY LEAVE

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to give their views on maternity leave. Twenty-four per cent of the total sample expressed views on maternity leave. Women who were not in the workforce during pregnancy tended to have traditional views on women's roles and childrearing. Daniel (1981), who conducted a similar study in the United Kingdom, had the same experience. As he stated:

> 'There is a marked counter-revolutionary feeling expressed by a substantial minority of our women to the effect that women with young children should not go out to work. It is instructive that, although they were invited to suggest changes that they would like to make it easier for women to return to work, many of our respondents took the opportunity to write at length saying that the place for women with young children was in the home and they should be actively discouraged from working.'

The experience in this study was much the same. Included here, therefore, are comments from women in employment during pregnancy. Thirty-one per cent of women who had worked during their pregnancies expressed views on maternity leave (n = 273).

The issue raised most frequently (by 19 per cent of those who gave views) was the unfairness of differential treatment of employees in regard to maternity leave benefits. The benefits for teachers drew a lot of criticism as did the fact that some women are paid for their maternity leave while others were not which was felt to be unjust; 'all women should be paid or no women'. Perhaps the quote that sums up the feeling best is this one:

> I feel there is a great deal of ignorance around in the ordinary workforce about maternity leave. Nothing was mentioned to me about having leave, even if it was unpaid, nor about returning to my position after the baby was born. I was not forced to leave but left of my own accord at seven months; being a shop assistant, the standing was too much. My own views on maternity leave are that it appears only to be around for teachers, nurses and the government workers; even

> unpaid leave is better than nothing. At least they have the opportunity to go back to the position they left if they want to. Just because they happen to train for their job a lot longer doesn't mean that my job isn't as rewarding or that it didn't take me a few years of experience to gain my position. (This woman in fact was eligible for maternity leave.)

Another woman who was not entitled to maternity leave benefits stated:

> 'All forms of workers should be able to get maternity leave or paternity leave. As I was working as an outdoor machinist there was no great problem in stopping my work, but it would have helped me very much if my husband had been able to get paternity leave while I was in hospital so he could have looked after the other children. He is a cabinet maker.'

The next most common complaint was the lack of information about maternity leave available to employees (12%):

> 'In smaller businesses, maternity leave and its availability is not well publicized and, if mentioned in conversation, not generally well received.'

The next most common response was praise for existing conditions. Needless to say these comments were from women who had taken maternity leave, were working in the public sector and often, were in the teaching profession:

> 'Very pleased with family leave enabling me to bring up the children while young and leaving a job available for someone else. With my first child I returned after eighteen months because I did not want to resign. I regretted having to leave my child with a minder. Now the situation is ideal.'
>
> 'Within the public service, rules are very reasonable and flexible to a point.'

About the same proportion of comments were made about maternity leave being unfair to employers, particularly in small business. Others were concerned about taking jobs from other women and not being available full-time for pre-school children.

Public sector women who had taken maternity leave were more likely to be critical of conditions and to offer suggestions for improvement. The complaints were about differential conditions in the public service, the need to extend the paid period, and the problem in New South Wales of having to return to work to be eligible for paid components of maternity leave.

Eight respondents specifically mentioned the need for paternity leave. Seven wanted improved facilities for mothers in the workplace and improved child care.

The overwhelming feeling that came from responses was the gap between public sector and private sector women in knowledge about their entitlements and in their expectations. When one considers that 46 per cent of women who were eligible to take maternity leave in the private sector and did not take it had no information on maternity leave, there is a great need to inform female workers of their rights.

Surprisingly, even among women who were in employment during their pregnancy eight per cent felt that maternity leave was 'unfair to employers', and that 'mothers should be home with their children' and were 'doing young people out of jobs'.

> 'I believe my maternity leave was very generous. Having a baby is a personal responsibility and I believe that employers are put in a very difficult position when they have to hold jobs open for women on maternity leave.'

Suggestions for improvements to maternity leave conditions from women related to issues such as returning to work part-time after maternity leave, and extending the period of maternity leave to two years. One women suggested giving employees a period of paid maternity leave based on their years of service with the employer.

Special Circumstances in Pregnancy

In addition to asking about observations and suggestions for maternity leave respondents were also asked if there were any special circumstances relating to their pregnancy in 1983–84 and work-status that would relate to this study. Twenty-seven per cent of women in scope answered this question.

Just over half mentioned health problems. Respondents who did not take maternity leave were more likely to have had problems of morning sickness, high blood pressure, or threatened miscarriage. Respondents who took maternity leave tended to have fewer problems during the pregnancy but experienced more problems at the time of the birth, such as premature labour.

Health problems experienced during pregnancy may be a major reason for a large number of women not taking maternity leave although entitled to it. These health problems may make them feel they will not be able to cope with continuing in the workforce after the birth, but in fact many do return to the workforce within eighteen months of the birth. The more frequent mention of premature births by women taking maternity leave is noted, a health issue not within the scope of this study.

Other comments related to special circumstances such as moving to another state during the pregnancy, being dismissed from the job, or the employer going out of business.

PART TWO

EMPLOYER SURVEY — THE PRIVATE SECTOR

9

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE OF EMPLOYER SURVEY

Part 1 considered the survey evidence on maternity leave use from the employee perspective. Parts 2 and 3 focus on maternity leave from the employer point of view. Most of the WREIP resources were directed towards surveying the private sector, because that is where the majority of women in the workforce are employed, thus the operation of maternity leave in the private sector throughout Australia was the focus of examination. The main objective was to look at the take-up of maternity leave in different industries and business sizes, and to identify advantages and disadvantages of maternity leave for private sector employers.

However, results of the survey of employees demonstrated the low take-up of maternity leave in the private sector and the lack of information about maternity leave provisions among women employed in the private sector. Therefore, in examining maternity leave from the employer perspective, the following approach is taken.

First, after discussing the survey design and procedure, Chapter 10 concentrates on which organizations have experienced or have not experienced maternity leave and compares this experience in different business sizes and industries. Second, the chapter gives a picture of how maternity leave operates among those establishments which have ever experienced employees taking maternity leave.

Chapter 11 goes on to discuss some of the other factors which influence maternity leave experience, namely the degree of casualization of the labour force in an establishment, and the percentage of female employees within an establishment.

Chapter 12 looks specifically at the operation of maternity leave in small, medium and large businesses for those readers with a specific interest in a particular business size.

Finally, Chapter 13 includes discussion of the views expressed by employers on maternity leave and its operation in Australia.

Procedure

A mailed survey was carried out on private sector establishments throughout Australia using a random stratified sample of eleven industry groupings and five different business sizes. The survey was conducted in two stages.

Stage 1 involved a survey of 3305 establishments in which a questionnaire was mailed together with a letter from the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI). This was followed by a reminder letter three to four weeks later. The survey was confidential; no names and addresses were requested The only means of identifying non-respondents was a unique number on each questionnaire.

At Stage 2 an intensive tracing exercise with follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 409 establishments in four industries and two business sizes (undertaken by Rearck Research Pty Ltd). The industries were Textile, Clothing and Footwear; Retail Trade; Finance, Business, and Property; and Recreation and Personal Services. Two size categories were targetted: the first with 5–19 and the second with 20–99 employees. Follow-up telephone interviews were restricted to the above groups due to limited finances. Good coverage of how maternity leave operates in small-to-medium businesses in these four industry sectors was obtained. However, caution must be exercised in comparing different industries and business sizes as response rates were much higher in the groups which were followed up intensively.

Sampling

The Australian Bureau of Statistics provided assistance with the survey and the sample design. They selected the sample of establishments from the Integrated Register Information System (IRIS). Set out below are the details of the sampling procedure conducted by the ABS.

The scope of the survey was all establishments with one or more employees throughout Australia, excluding the public and agricultural sector. The sample size aimed for was between 800 to 1200 units. To allow for non-response and for nil and defunct units, a sample was selected systematically from the frame by business size and a sample of just over 3300 establishments across Australia was drawn.

Stratification and Selection Procedures

In making selections, the population in the different businesses and industries was divided into eleven industries and five employment size strata.

The following industry categories were used:

1. Food, Beverages and Tobacco
2. Textiles, Clothing and Footwear

3. Other Machinery and Equipment
4. Other Manufacturing
5. Wholesale Trade
6. Retail Trade (excluding motor)
7. Finance, Business, Property
8. Health
9. Other Community Services (including Education)
10. Recreation, Personal and other Services
11. Other Industries

The employment size-strata used were:

1. 0–4 employees
2. 5–19 employees
3. 20–99 employees,
4. 100–499 employees
5. 500+ employees.

Originally the size-strata proposed were 1–19, 20–49, 50–99, 100–499 and 500+ employees. However, the very small establishments (1–4 employees) have a much higher defunct rate than the large establishments and so, to allow for this, the 1–19 employees stratum was split. Allocation across the resulting six size-strata would then have resulted in allocating the minimum sample size to many strata, and so the 20–49 and 50–99 employee size strata were collapsed. It had been anticipated that estimates by size would be for the categories 1–19, 20–99, 100–499 and 500+ employees, using reported size rather than register size. However, as maternity leave is a rare occurrence in the 1–19 employee size, analysis throughout the report is generally in terms of three business sizes: 1–99, 100–499, and 500+ employees.

A large number of units in the sample had unknown employment (approximately 30%) according to ABS. It was originally intended to include these in a separate stratum, but this idea was abandoned when investigations revealed that these units represented only a small part of the female workforce (about 5%). Also a large proportion of these units are defunct or have zero employment. Therefore the results in Part 2 of this monograph are based on a sample selected from a list of establishments which account for about 95 per cent of full-time female employment.

Allocation of Units by Industry and Size

Data for the sample design came from the Survey of Employment and Earnings (SEE). The design variable was the total number of females employed. Data was taken from two subsets of the SEE data:

- data on all enterprises;
- data on single-location enterprises (i.e. establishments) only.

Both subsets were required in the design, the first, to give the distribution of female workers across industries, the second, to give the distribution across establishment sizes within industries.

The Size 5 stratum (500 employees and over) was completely enumerated and the minimum sample in a stratum was set at 15. Allocation to the industry by size strata proceeded as follows:

- a sample of 2500 was allocated across industries in proportion to the number of female workers estimated to be in that industry from the data on all enterprises.
- The strata of Size 5 were completely enumerated.
- Sample units were allocated across the remaining four sizes within each industry in proportion to the number of female employees estimated by the single location data and weighted up according to the number of establishments known to be in each stratum.

The initial allocation of 2500 units aimed to achieve a sample take of 800–1200, allowing for a response rate of 30 to 50 per cent and assuming that the frame contained only in-scope units. However, in addition to active units, there are an unknown number of units on the frame which have zero employment or are defunct. The proportion of these in the different size-strata were estimated from the SEE data, and the sample allocations increased accordingly. The proportions of nils and defuncts were estimated as: 55% in Size 1; 25% in Size 2; 15% in Size 3; 15% in Size 4.

Adjustment of the initial sample allocation by these rates brought the total sample to 3302 units. Table 24 contains the final allocation and stratum population numbers (it should perhaps be noted that there were some

Table 24: ABS sampling frame for industries: by business size

Industry	*Business Size (number of employees)*					
	1–4	*5–19*	*20–99*	*100–499*	*500 +*	*Total*
Manufacturing						
Food, beverages, tobacco	27	20	18	18	39	122
Textiles, clothing, footwear	27	29	56	84	12	208
Other machinery and equipment	27	20	18	18	22	105
Other manufacturing	27	28	44	52	105	256
Wholesale	88	100	73	22	13	296
Retail	175	153	93	84	29	534
Finance	297	104	115	81	70	667
Health	122	27	55	55	10	269
Other Community Service	57	61	115	20	13	266
Recreation	108	67	49	22	13	259
Other	96	69	55	31	72	323
Total	1051	678	691	487	398	3305

adjustments to this sample due to the inclusion of some public sector establishments).

The sample was selected systematically from the frame. Before selection the frame was ordered by State and number of employees within the industry size-strata, so that the sample would be spread by size and across Australia.

Table 25: Industry responses in each cell and percentage of sample in each cell: by business size

Industry	*Business Size (number of employees)*					
	1–4	*5–19*	*20–99*	*100–499*	*500 +*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
	(n)	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*
Manufacturing						
Food, beverages, tobacco	4	32	44	38	46	33
	(1)	(6)	(8)	(8)	(18)	(41)
Textiles, clothing, footwear	15	41(a)	63(a)	30	100	42
	(4)	(12)	(35)	(25)	(12)	(88)
Other machinery and equipment	8	45	44	53	36	35
	(2)	(9)	(8)	(9)	(8)	(36)
Other manufacturing	15	32	39	54	41	39
	(4)	(9)	(17)	(28)	(43)	(101)
Wholesale	12	27	30	59	54	27
	(11)	(27)	(22)	(13)	(7)	(80)
Retail	26	50(a)	70(a)	39	62	45
	(44)	(77)	(65)	(33)	(18)	(237)
Finance	17	64(a)	69(a)	54	47	39
	(50)	(66)	(69)	(44)	(32)	(261)
Health	25	56	45	36	40	33
	(43)	(15)	(25)	(20)	(4)	(107)
Other Community Service	20	36	47	39	13	35
	(13)	(21)	(37)	(7)	(1)	(79)
Recreation	13	73(a)	53(a)	48	67	42
	(14)	(49)	(26)	(10)	(8)	(107)
Other	25	26	45	65	32	35
	(26)	(18)	(25)	(20)	(26)	(115)
Total	19	46	49	45	44	38
	(212)	(309)	(337)	(217)	(177)	(1252)

Note: (a) These indicate the strata which were followed up by telephone interview

Evaluation of Sample

Table 24 shows the final sample selected by ABS for this survey and Table 25 shows the actual responses in each industry and size cell of the sampling frame. The percentages show the proportion of the sample who responded in each industry and size category. Looking at the percentage of total responses for each of the business sizes, there seems to be little variation with the exception of Size 1 (0–4 employees). As anticipated the proportion of responses was lowest in Size 1. Only 19 per cent responded in this size category. There is more variation in the percentage of total responses for the different industries. The lowest response rates occur in wholesale trade (27%) and the community services area (30%). The highest response rate is 44 per cent for the retail trade sector.

All strata, which were part of the telephone follow-up (marked with asterisk), with the exception of Textile, Clothing and Footwear in Size 2 (5–19 employees), reached at least a 50 per cent response rate.

Chi square statistical test was computed on the difference between the observed and expected distribution of business size in the sample (Chi Square 129.5 d.f. =4 $p > .001$). The samples were significantly different owing to the under-representation of Size 1 (0–4 employees) as predicted by ABS.

Chi square was also computed on the difference between the observed and expected distribution of different industry sectors in the sample (Chi Square = 22.91 d.f. = 10 not significant). There were no significant differences between the expected and observed industry distributions within the sample.

Response Rate

At the completion of both stages one and two, there were 1277 completed responses. However, this number reduced to 1252 usable responses. In some instances respondents obliterated the identification number which would have enabled industry classification. In other instances respondents were reluctant to disclose the number of employees. Of the original 3314 organizations in the sample, 72 refused to participate, and 572 were identified as either defunct or no longer with any employees. The usable response rate was 46 per cent. This was a good result given the ABS predictions, and particularly in view of the fact that 17 per cent of the sample was accounted for as defunct or having nil employees.

Another issue that posed some problems in evaluating the response rate was the fact that an establishment-based sample was used. The decision was made by the steering committee to conduct a survey of establishments rather than enterprises. The two are defined by ABS in the *Australian Yearbook* (1986) as follows:

An enterprise (the second level of economic unit). The enterprise is that unit comprising all operations in Australia of a single operating entity. (The term 'single legal entity' means a sole trader, partnership, company, trust, co-operative or estate in the private sector, or a department, local government authority or statutory authority in the government sector.)

An establishment (the smallest economic unit). The establishment covers all operations carried out by one enterprise at a single physical location.

In the case of single establishment enterprises, the enterprise and establishment are the same; in the case of multi-establishment enterprises this is not the case, such as for banks, insurance companies and large chain stores.

The decision to conduct an establishment-based survey of businesses created problems in the analysis as quite often decisions are made at an enterprise level for multi-establishment enterprises. Therefore in the analysis the differences in use of maternity leave in single establishment enterprises compared to multi-establishment enterprises are examined.

This distinction also created problems in analysing the response rate because in some instances although questionnaires were sent to small establishments of multi-establishment enterprises, the questionnaires were completed at the enterprise level. In one case, a reply was expected from an establishment with 20–99 employees and a reply was received from the enterprise listing 900 employees. In another instance, questionnaires were sent to twenty-eight establishments of a large retail enterprise and replies were received from only two establishments — in this instance information from an enterprise perspective was not given.

There are sources of error in all surveys, and this enterprise–establishment dilemma is one of the problems faced in this survey.

10

WHICH ORGANIZATIONS EXPERIENCE MATERNITY LEAVE?

Thirty-six per cent of respondent establishments in the private sector had experienced employees taking or requesting maternity leave at some time. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) had no experience of employees taking or requesting maternity leave. This low experience of maternity leave by these establishments confirms findings in the employee survey of low use of maternity leave in the private sector.

Table 26: Maternity leave experience of establishments: by business size

Business Size (number of employees)	*Experienced Maternity Leave* %	*No Experience of Maternity Leave* %	*Total* *n*
1-4	2	98	192
5-19	8	92	304
20-99	31	69	335
100-499	66	34	217
500 +	93	7	177

In relation to business size, there is low experience of any maternity leave in the two smallest business sizes included in the stratification. The larger the size of the organization, the more likely the organization is to have experienced employees taking maternity leave (see Table 26). There is a problem in looking at business size and maternity leave usage, as the larger the size of the organization (or to be more precise the number of female employees) the greater the chance that the organization will have experience of maternity leave. However, findings from the employee survey show that there is not only a greater take-up of maternity leave in large establishments but also more awareness of the existence of maternity leave provisions. This is related to the fact that larger organizations are more likely to be unionized

and to have personnel departments which have greater knowledge and awareness of award regulations to handle these matters.

Nevertheless, it is quite clear that the experience of employees taking maternity leave in small organizations is very low, and increases with the size of the organization. All but seven per cent of organizations with 500 or more employees, two thirds of organizations with 100–499 employees, but only a third of organizations with 20–99 employees had experience of maternity leave. Because experience of maternity leave was so small in the two smallest business sizes, these categories were combined to form a category of 'under 100' employees.

Table 27: Maternity leave experience of establishments: by industry sector

Industry Sector	*Experienced Maternity Leave* %	*No Experience of Maternity Leave* %	*Total* *n*
Manufacturing Sector			
Food, Beverages, Tobacco	59	41	41
Textile, Clothing, Footwear	49	51	90
Other Machinery & Equipment	39	61	36
Other Manufacturing	56	44	101
Wholesale and Retail Sector			
Wholesale Trade	33	67	78
Retail Trade	25	75	234
Finance, Property, Business	34	66	254
Health and Community Services Sector			
Health	40	60	107
Other Community Service	44	56	77
Recreation/Personal Services	15	85	106
Other Industries	34	66	108

As Table 27 shows industry sectors with the most experience of employees taking maternity leave were the Manufacturing sector where over half the establishments in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco industry. In the Textile, Clothing and Footwear industry just under 50 per cent of establishments had experienced maternity leave at some time. Community Services and Health had experienced 40 and 44 per cent respectively. In Finance, Business and Property, a third of the establishments had experienced maternity leave. Just over a quarter of establishments in the Wholesale/Retail sector had experienced maternity leave, and only 15 per cent of establishments in Recreation/Personal Services sector. The lack of experience of maternity leave by large numbers of employers in the Wholesale/Retail and

Recreational/Personal Services sectors would be due, in part, to their high use of casual, part-time labour.

Because the experience of maternity leave in establishments is highly related to the size of the establishment,and in organizations with less than 20 employees it is virtually non-existent, the major emphasis in the report is the effect of business size on maternity leave. Figure 12 shows the proportion of establishments of different business sizes and industry sector that have experienced maternity leave. (Owing to small cell sizes, industries have been combined into six sectors).

In the smallest business size (1–99 employees) only 16 per cent had experienced maternity leave at any stage. The Community Services sector has the most experience of maternity leave (31 per cent) among small businesses no doubt due to the high proportion of professional and paraprofessional women employed in health and education. The high use of maternity leave by women employed in these occupations was demonstrated in the employee survey. Establishments in the Community Services area are more likely to have experienced maternity leave in both the other business size categories also (although there are few Community Services establishments in the 500+ business size).

In the category 100–499 employees, the Wholesale and Retail sector has the next greatest experience of maternity leave after Community Services (74 and 93 per cent respectively), followed by Finance, Business and Property (61 per cent). Most organizations with 500+ employees have experienced employees taking maternity leave, the lowest being the category of Other Industries (77 per cent). Organizations in the Other Industries category appear to have low rates of female employment which may account for their relatively low use of maternity leave compared to other industries.

How Maternity Leave Operated in Establishments Which Experienced It

In the employee survey it was found that the two organizational characteristics most related to the taking of maternity leave were sector of employment and size of organization. In the private sector survey, it is also evident that maternity leave is related to size of organization. Therefore, while a detailed analysis of the operation of maternity leave will be made in the subsequent pages, it must be emphasized that maternity leave is a minor factor affecting employers. First, only one in three establishments have experienced employees taking maternity leave, and as the rates of maternity leave set out in Table 31 show, the numbers who take maternity leave are very small. It would have been interesting to compare the impact of maternity leave on an organization compared to issues such as worker's compensation, or repetitive strain injury. A similar study to this one conducted in

Table 28: Problems experienced with maternity leave: by business size

	Business Size (number of employees)			
	Under 100 (n = 123) %	*100–499 (n = 137)* %	*500 + (n = 155)* %	*Total (n = 415)* %
Difficulty finding a temporary replacement while an employee is on maternity leave	27	32	46	36
Uncertainty about whether an employee will return from maternity leave	54	81	88	76
Having an employee failing to return after stating her intention to return from maternity leave	28	46	66	49
Being involved in disputes and complaints over maternity leave	1	5	15	7
Granting an employee more than fifty-two weeks' maternity leave	7	2	3	3
Having to train replacement employees while an employee is on maternity leave	51	76	87	73
Having to retrain an employee after maternity leave	14	31	52	35
Finding that the same employees have taken maternity leave more than once	11	26	56	33
Employees asking to change to part-time work after maternity leave	41	54	61	53
Employees requesting more flexible working hours after maternity leave	39	43	48	44
Employees asking to change to a different kind of job after maternity leave	5	24	38	24
Employees taking less than fifty-two weeks' maternity leave?	65	87	90	82

the United Kingdom (Daniel, 1981) found that maternity leave was of minor importance when compared to other legislation affecting employers.

This section looks at the overall experience of maternity leave in the 415 private sector establishments which had experienced employees taking or requesting maternity leave. Descriptions of how maternity leave is experienced in three specific business sizes, namely small-to-medium, medium-to-large, and large organizations, is contained in Chapter 12.

Problems with maternity leave (See Table 28)*:* One of the most common experiences of employers is uncertainty about whether an employee will return following maternity leave. Seventy-six per cent of establishments with experience of maternity leave expressed this uncertainty. Around half the employers who had experienced maternity leave in their organizations had actually had employees fail to return from maternity leave. Another major problem is having to retrain replacements; 73 per cent of employers had faced this problem at some stage. Thirty-five per cent had also had problems with having to retrain an employee on her return from maternity leave.

Eighty-two per cent of establishment found that some employees take less than 52 weeks maternity leave, a finding similar to that in the employee survey. Only three per cent of private sector employers have granted employees more than 52 weeks leave.

Fifty-three per cent of employers have had employees requesting to change from full- to part-time work. This occurred more often in the Finance and Wholesale/Retail sectors, no doubt because jobs in sales, or clerical and keyboard work can be more readily accommodated in part-time arrangements. Forty-four per cent found that employees wanted to work more flexible hours once they had a child, and one in four had experience of women wanting to change to different jobs after maternity leave.

Twenty-nine per cent of employers found that maternity leave is more difficult to accommodate in some occupational categories than others (see Table 30). These tended to be the more skilled areas such as managerial, professional and technical occupations. In smaller businesses, the accounting and bookkeeping areas were mentioned, as in many cases there was only one person handling this area within the organization.

Dealing with maternity leave (See Table 29)*:* The most common way of dealing with maternity leave is finding replacements from outside the organization — 64 per cent of employers have used this strategy. Forty-six per cent transferred someone from a different position or section of the company. Forty-eight per cent tried changing duties around among existing staff. Twenty-six per cent hired permanent replacements. Rarely do organizations cover positions with overtime: only 5% of employers had ever done this. (It should be noted that employers tend to use several of the methods listed above which is why the percentages mentioned do not add to 100).

Table 29: Methods used to cover vacancies caused by maternity leave: by business size

	Business Size (number of employees)			
	0–99	*100–499*	*500 +*	*Total*
	%	*%*	*%*	*%*
	(n = 130)	*(n = 144)*	*(n = 164)*	*(n = 438)*
Make temporary appointments from outside	53	59	77	64
Take on permanent replacements from outside	19	32	27	26
Transfer someone from another branch or section	26	42	65	46
Cover with overtime	5	3	6	5
Change duties around among existing staff	42	49	54	48
Nothing specific/leave position open	4	6	5	5
Other	5	1	–	2

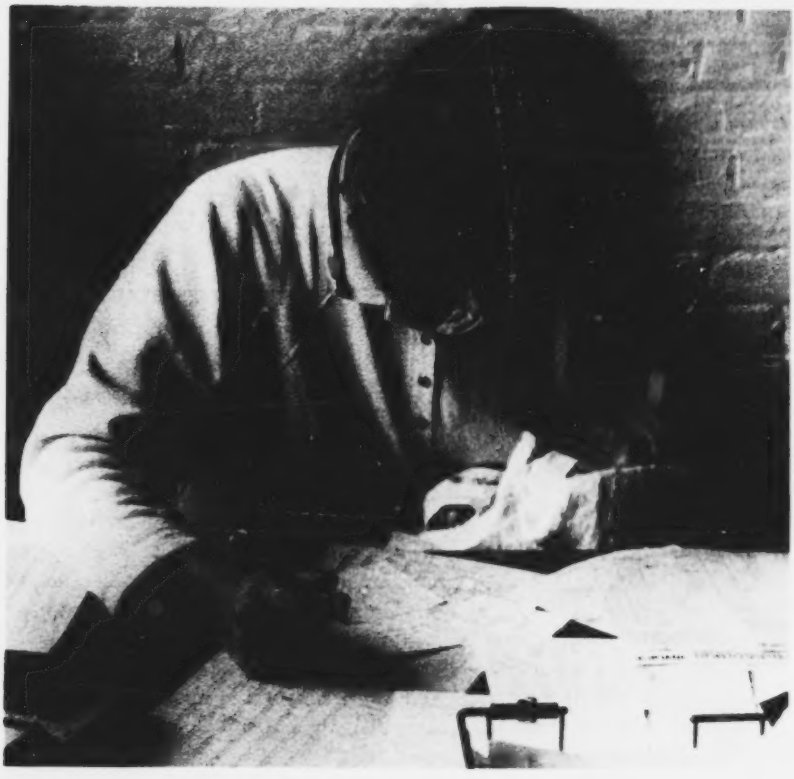
Benefits of maternity leave (See Table 30)*:* In speaking of potential benefits of maternity leave, 66 per cent believe that maternity leave enables them to retain skilled workers, 28 per cent state they are able to recruit more frequently. Fifty-four per cent feel it gives other workers opportunities to have temporary promotions in which they acquire new skills.

Comments from the larger organizations suggest that there is a trend for women to stay on in the workforce after children, or to return to work later in the childrearing years. This could be related to the demographic trend towards later childbearing and to having fewer children.

How maternity leave has changed employment patterns: While it is unlawful to discriminate against women on the basis of gender, marital status or childbearing, a quarter of employers (26%) with experience of maternity leave state their employment patterns have changed since the introduction of maternity leave. The most common change is in the use of more female casual staff (41%). Eleven per cent are employing fewer women in the childbearing years. Comments from employers suggests they are employing younger females, unmarried women, and older females in their post-childbearing years. In more skilled positions, where training is required, larger organizations say they are being more careful in recruiting. They are endeavouring to select employees both male and female who are 'career-minded'.

Table 30: Benefits experienced from maternity leave: by business size

	Business Size (number of employees)			
	0–99	*100–499*	*500 +*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%
ML enables you to retain skilled workers (n = 365)	65	66	63	66
ML enables you to recruit more frequently (n = 338)	24	26	32	28
ML gives some workers opportunities for temporary promotion so that they learn additional skills (n = 385)	43	59	58	54
Employers who find ML more difficult to deal with in certain occupational categories than in others in their establishment (n = 423)	25	30	32	29



123

Operation of Maternity Leave Over One Calendar Year

To obtain a picture of maternity leave and its operation during the course of a full year in the private sector, a 12 month period of time was designated for examination, (from January to December, 1985). Respondents were asked:

1. How many employees commenced any maternity leave?
2. How many employees returned from taking maternity leave?
3. During 1985 how many employees who had been on maternity leave resigned:
   (a) without return to work;
   (b) within two months of returning to work;
   (c) within six months of returning to work?

Information from these questions enabled some measure of:

- the percentage of the total labour force and the percentage of the total female labour force of an establishment taking maternity leave during a year;
- the percentage of those who return from maternity leave over the number who take maternity leave for this 12 month period. It must be emphasized that this figure is a crude estimate, as maternity leave is for twelve months' duration, thus the comparison is not necessarily of the same employees.

In calculating these measures an assumption has been made that in most cases the size of the organization will not have changed to a significant degree during the twelve month period. The rates also presume that the numbers taking maternity leave are relatively constant through the years, 1984 and 1985. These assumptions mean that the rates described in the accompanying tables are crude estimates.

Proportion of Workforce Taking Maternity Leave

The real impact of maternity leave on an establishment is the proportion of *all* employees absent on unpaid leave through maternity leave. Maternity leave is often reported only as a percentage of the female workforce rather than as a percentage of the total labour force. Also reports often exclude the casual female labour force and this tends to overestimate the effect of maternity leave in organizations where there is a high rate of female casuals.

Therefore, for this analysis, the mean percentage of the female labour force who took maternity leave by business size and industry has been calculated and shown in Table 31. In addition, the table shows the mean percentage of the total workforce on maternity leave in organizations with over 19 employees by industry and by business size compared to the mean percentage of the total female workforce. The means relate only to establishments which had experienced maternity leave.

Table 31: Percentage of total workforce taking maternity leave in 1985: by industry and business size (a)

Business Size and Industry	*Mean Percentage ML taken in 1985*		
	Total Labour Force	*Female Labour Force*	
	%	%	*n*
BUSINESS SIZE			
Overall	1.21	1.8	289
20-99 employees	3.02	5.8	51
100-499 employees	1.03	2.1	105
500 + employees	0.65	2.0	133
INDUSTRY			
Overall	1.21	2.7	289
Manufacturing	0.84	2.7	101
Wholesale/Retail	0.94	2.0	57
Finance	1.88	3.5	57
Community Services	1.89	2.4	42
Recreation/Personal Services	0.80	1.4	10
Other Industries	0.65	3.6	22

Note: (a) only businesses which had experienced maternity leave in 1985

Taking first the mean percentage of the total labour force, it can be seen that the percentage of employees who took leave is small. Understandably the percentage is larger in small businesses where, however, it must be recalled, that there are fewer organizations which have experienced employees requesting maternity leave. Overall the maternity leave rate is 1.2 per cent of the total workforce within an organization. In large organizations where maternity leave is most common, the maternity leave rate is .65 per cent of the total labour force.

The Finance and Community Service sectors have the highest maternity leave rates (1.9%): the Wholesale/Retail sector is lower (0.94 per cent), which is no doubt related to the high use of casual labour.

Proportion of Workforce Returning from Maternity Leave

Table 32 shows the rates of return to work after maternity leave. As with the rates for maternity leave taking, these figures are also crude estimates. In order to obtain these figures the number of those returning from maternity leave in 1985 was divided by the number who took maternity leave in 1985 and expressed as a percentage, which is called the 'return rate'. The mean return rates were then calculated for each industry sector (Recreation/ Personal Services and Other Industries were excluded due to small numbers).

Table 32: Mean rate of return from maternity leave: by industry and business size (a)

Business Size and Industry	*Mean Percentage of ML Takers Returning to Work in 1985*	
	%	*n*
BUSINESS SIZE		
Overall	69.9	177
20-99 employees	86.3	22
100-499 employees	79.9	49
500 + employees	61.9	106
INDUSTRY		
Overall	69.9	156
Manufacturing	79.2	65
Wholesale/Retail	59.5	27
Finance	53.6	37
Community Services	84.2	26

Note: (a) only businesses which had experienced returns from maternity leave in 1985

The Community Services sector has the greatest retention of employees after maternity leave. This finding is consistent with the employee data, where survey results indicated a high retention rate of women with higher occupational status such as nurses, health workers, and teachers. The Manufacturing sector also has a high retention rate (79 per cent of workers). Lower retention rates are evident in the Finance area, again a result consistent with findings from a study on maternity leave by one of the major banks which found very low retention rates among female staff (information given in personal communication). In the Retail sector women often resign after maternity leave but tend to return to casual positions or part-time work.

Over 300 establishments experienced employees taking maternity leave in the year under examination, that is 24 per cent had employees on maternity leave. Sixteen per cent of establishments had employees returning from maternity leave during 1985; thirteen per cent experienced employees failing to return from maternity leave; three per cent experienced employees resigning two months after returning from maternity leave; and three per cent experienced resignations within six months of return from maternity leave. In 1985 none of the establishments in the 0–4 employees category had employees taking leave; two per cent in the 5–19 employee category; and 15 per cent in the 20–99 employee category. Forty-nine per cent of the medium-to-large organizations (100–499 employees) and 80 per cent of organizations employing 500 plus persons had employees on maternity leave in 1985.

Table 33 sets out details on how maternity leave operated in the period

under examination in some of the establishments surveyed. These examples were taken at random from the data.

The table illustrates the variability in how maternity leave operates in different organizations in a 12 month period. The maternity leave rate is calculated by dividing the number of employees taking maternity leave by the total number of employees within the organization at the time of interview. A return rate can be calculated by dividing the number of returnees by the number taking maternity leave. For the first organization cited, the maternity leave rate is .35 per cent, the return rate would be 36 per cent; in the second example, the maternity leave rate is 1.7 per cent, the return rate would be 60 per cent. The examples in this table demonstrate the wide variability in the use of maternity leave in individual organizations, and also the small numbers involved.

Table 33: Examples of maternity leave experience in selected establishments

Industry Sector	*Total no. Employed* *n*	*No. on ML* *n*	*Returned from ML* *n*	*Resigned on ML* *n*	*ML Rate* %
Manufacturing					
Case A	3100	11	4	2	0.35
Case B	279	5	3	0	1.7
Case C	40	1	1	0	2.5
Wholesale/Retail					
Case A	2365	11	4	2	0.46
Case B	254	2	1	0	0.78
Case C	30	1	0	0	3.3
Finance					
Case A	2916	33	5	18	1.9
Case B	338	3	3	2	0.88
Community Services					
Case A	213	4	4	0	1.8
Case B	443	10	5	1	2.2
Recreation/Personal					
Case A	145	3	2	1	2.0

11

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE MATERNITY LEAVE EXPERIENCE

Several issues affect maternity leave usage in Australia. Evidence from both employees and employers demonstrates low use of maternity leave in the private sector. Survey data from employees indicated that lack of information about maternity leave is one of the reasons why such leave is not taken. Other factors which influence maternity leave rates may be the extent to which employers use casual labour, because casual workers have no maternity leave entitlements. The proportion of females within an organization will determine the maternity leave rates and the impact of maternity leave on the organization. Another issue is the effect of State legislation such as in New South Wales where all employees are entitled to maternity leave with the exclusion of casual or temporary workers, and those who have not been employed with the employer for 12 months continuously.

Female Casual Labour

In the sample of establishments, 126 (10%) had no female employees at the time of the survey: maternity leave was not a relevant issue for them.

Casual or temporarily employed women are not entitled to maternity leave, thus organizations with high rates of casual female labour will have less experience and fewer problems with maternity leave. In this study 55 per cent of organizations with female employees had no casual female employees. The remaining 45 per cent which employed some female casual labour were divided (by median split) into high and low users of casual labour. The category of low use included establishments with below 12 per cent of total staff as female casuals; high use represents 12 per cent and above of total labour force as female casuals (range .05% to 93%).

Table 34 illustrates that industries least likely to use female casual labour are in Manufacturing, Finance, and the Other Industries category. Recreation/Personal Services sector is the highest user of female casual labour, followed by Wholesale/Retail and Community Services.

Table 34: Use of casual female labour: by industry sector (a)

Industry Sector	*Casual Female Labour*		
	No Use %	*Low Use* %	*High Use* %
Manufacturing	62	31	7
Wholesale/Retail	44	10	46
Finance	65	24	12
Community Services	51	15	33
Recreation/Personal Services	36	12	53
Other Industries	65	33	3
TOTAL	55	20	25

Note: (a) includes only establishments which employed some female casual labour

This is consistent with the finding from the employee survey of lower use of maternity leave by employees in the Wholesale/Retail sector and the Recreation/Personal Services sector. These two sectors have the highest use of female casual labour; 46 per cent in the Retail sector and 53 per cent in Recreation/Personal Services. Just under half the organizations in the Community Services sector use casual labour. This is likely to be most common in the health area where hospitals and nursing homes require 24–hour rosters and there is often high use of casual labour and part-time work.

Proportion of Female Employees

An issue which impacts on maternity leave usage in an organization is the percentage of the labour force in that organization that is female. Establishments in major industry categories where more than fifty per cent of employees are female are shown in Table 35; excluded from this table are the 30 per cent of organizations within the sample which had no female employees and the two smallest business size categories.

Maternity leave has greatest impact on organizations with high proportions of female employees. In this study, industries with the highest proportion of establishments employing over fifty per cent female employees are in the Community Services sector, Wholesale/Retail Trade and in Recreation/Personal Services (see Table 35). One also finds a high use of casual female labour in these industries (see Table 34).

The location of the establishment is another issue which may affect experience of maternity leave. Because of the legislation on maternity leave in New South Wales, more use of maternity leave could have been expected. However, this was not the case. There were no significant differences between the States in Australia on the experience of maternity leave.

Table 35: Percentage of establishments with more than fifty per cent female employees: by industry sector (a)

Industry Sector	*Female Employees* %
Manufacturing	35
Wholesale/Retail	68
Finance/Business & Property	50
Community Services	81
Recreation/Personal Services	62
Other Industries	5

Note: (a) excluding organizations with no female employees and the two smallest business sizes.

12

MATERNITY LEAVE EXPERIENCE IN SPECIFIC BUSINESS SIZES

For people interested to see how maternity leave operates in specific business sizes, presented here are profiles of experience of maternity leave in the three main business sizes. The following analysis is restricted to only those establishments which had experienced maternity leave and were therefore in scope and able to comment on how maternity leave affected them.

In Small-To-Medium Size Establishments (Under 100 Employees)

The analysis here is of small-to-medium size establishments which includes businesses both as single enterprises and as small establishments which are part or branches of larger enterprises such as banks, insurance companies, retail stores and supermarkets.

Sixteen per cent of small-to-medium size establishments had experience of maternity leave. Most of these had over 19 employees.

The experience of maternity leave differed in each industry sector. The Community Services sector had most experience of maternity leave (36 per cent) followed by the Finance, Business and Property sector (24 per cent) Wholesale/Retail Trade (19 per cent) and Manufacturing (15 per cent). Maternity leave was virtually non-existent in the Recreation/Personal Services sector. In the Manufacturing sector small establishments had far less experience of maternity leave compared to those with medium-to-large size establishments (100–499 employees) and those with more than 500 employees.

Award coverage: Of the 130 establishments which experienced maternity leave in this size category, 74 per cent had all their female employees covered by an award or industrial agreement, 17 per cent had some covered and

nine per cent stated that none of their female employees were covered. Eighty-four per cent stated all their female employees were working under awards which included maternity leave provisions.

Establishments which employed some employees not covered by maternity leave provisions in their awards were asked how they handled requests for maternity leave in such cases. Eighty-six per cent stated they sometimes allowed leave on the same basis as the award provisions, 52 per cent said employees sometimes resign, 57 per cent stated that sometimes employees resign but can apply for re-employment and will be given preference when positions arise. Thirty-six per cent gave employees leave but on conditions different from those of the award.

Maternity leave in 1985: Of the 130 organizations in this business size which experienced maternity leave, 45 per cent had someone taking maternity leave; 25 per cent had someone returning; 15 per cent experienced someone resigning without returning from maternity leave, and 4 per cent experienced an employee resigning within two months of return. Two percent experienced someone resigning within six months of returning to work.

Sixty-two percent of employers stated they had never had an employee resign because of pregnancy without requesting or taking maternity leave: 38 per cent had experienced this phenomenon.

Problems with maternity leave: Respondents were asked whether they had encountered certain situations in relation to maternity leave. Fifty-four per cent of small-to-medium size businesses experienced uncertainty about whether an employee will return from maternity leave; twenty-eight per cent had experienced an employee failing to return after stating her intention to return from maternity leave. Only 1 per cent had been involved in disputes over maternity leave provisions.

Concerning finding replacements and retraining, twenty-seven per cent had some difficulty finding temporary replacements. Fifty-one per cent experienced having to train a replacement while an employee was on maternity leave, 14 per cent experienced having to retrain an employee who returned from maternity leave.

For these establishments, eleven per cent experienced the same employee taking maternity leave for a second time. Some establishments found that employees tend to take less than 52 weeks maternity leave (65%); and only seven per cent had granted an employee more than 52 weeks.

Forty-one per cent found that employees ask to change from full- to part-time work; 39 per cent experienced employees requesting more flexible hours. Employees requesting to change to different jobs after maternity leave occurred in five per cent of these establishments. In the employee survey it was found that employees often wanted less demanding jobs after returning to the workforce from maternity leave.

Benefits of maternity leave: When asked about the benefits employers may have experienced with maternity leave, sixty-five per cent of small-to-

medium size businesses agreed that maternity leave enabled them to retain skilled workers; 34 per cent agreed that it enabled them to recruit staff more often. Forty-three per cent stated that maternity leave gives other workers opportunities for temporary promotion, which meant that they learned additional skills (see Table 30).

Dealing with maternity leave: A quarter of small-to-medium size businesses found that maternity leave was more difficult to deal with in particular occupational categories compared to others in their establishment. Generally, the occupational classifications that caused problems were the high-skill technical positions. It is often difficult to find temporary replacements in these occupations.

Various techniques are used to cover vacancies created through maternity leave (see Table 29). In small businesses, the most common way of handling vacancies is to make temporary appointments from outside (53%); 42 per cent change duties around among existing staff; twenty-six per cent transfer someone from another branch or section; 19 per cent take on permanent replacements. Very few cover positions with overtime (5%).

Although it is unlawful to discriminate against women on the basis of sex, marital status or pregnancy, nineteen per cent stated that the introduction of maternity leave provisions had changed their employment patterns — 13 per cent stated they were employing fewer women in the childbearing years and 27 per cent stated they were using more casual workers. Comments from small businessmen on recruiting and employment patterns reveal strategies used to avoid the problems of maternity leave:

> 'We are keener to employ very young girls, who will leave in 2 to 5 years. This is cheaper in the long term. However, we maintain a nucleus of senior ladies who have had their families and will remain for long periods.' (Finance/Property sector)
>
> 'Would attempt to find female employees without childbearing aspirations.' (Finance/Property sector)
>
> 'Little point in employing and training staff who stand a great chance of starting families and making use of maternity leave provisions. In a smaller operation such as this, it is not practical at all. In some cases we have re-employed women who have left to start families and reapplied for positions (on their merits only).' (Manufacturing sector)
>
> 'Use older women as casuals. Try to employ above 40 years of age.' (Retail sector)

Before moving on to look at maternity leave in larger businesses, the implications of differences between small enterprises and small establishments which are part of larger enterprises should be examined. One of the problems of using an establishment-based survey and stratifying by business size and industry is that confusion can arise in analysis when small businesses and small establishments which in fact are part of larger enterprises are being examined together. It was expected that there would be greater experience of maternity leave in small establishments which are part of

larger enterprises such as suburban branches of banks, insurance companies, retail stores or supermarkets. In order to counteract such potential confusion, the analysis below of maternity leave experience by establishment size (0–100 employees) was conducted.

Table 36 shows that, as expected, there is greater experience of employees taking maternity leave in establishments which are part of larger enterprises than in small single enterprises.

Table 36: Experience of maternity leave: by business type and size

Business Type and Size	*Experience of Maternity Leave*		
	Yes	*No*	*Total*
	%	%	*n*
UNDER 100 EMPLOYEES			
Small single enterprise	10	90	664
Small establishment part of larger enterprise	38	62	164
OVER 100 EMPLOYEES			
Large establishments	78	22	394

In Medium-To-Large Establishments (100–499 Employees)

Sixty-six per cent of medium-to-large establishments experienced maternity leave. The industry sector with most experience of maternity leave was Manufacturing (28 per cent), followed by the Wholesale/Retail Trade. Nineteen per cent of establishments in Finance/Property experienced maternity leave.

Award coverage: In these establishments, 69 per cent had all their female employees working under awards or industrial agreements; 28 per cent had some under awards and others not; and three per cent employed women who were not under awards.

In 91 per cent of cases organizations with employees not under awards with maternity leave provisions allowed maternity leave on the same basis as those working under awards. Five per cent allowed leave on a different basis than usual maternity leave conditions. In 52 per cent of establishments, employees were able to resign and reapply for positions later; 36 per cent found employees simply resigned.

Maternity leave in 1985: Seventy-four per cent of medium-to-large organizations experienced employees taking maternity leave; 38 per cent had

employees returning from taking maternity leave; 34 per cent experienced employees failing to return. Eight per cent had employees who resigned within two months of return; four per cent had employees who resigned within six months of return.

Dealing with maternity leave: In dealing with maternity leave, 81 per cent of these establishments were uncertain about whether an employee would return from maternity leave, 46 per cent experienced employees failing to return after stating their intention to return from maternity leave. Only 5 per cent had ever had any disputes over the maternity leave issue. Training replacements had caused problems in 76 per cent of establishments, 31 per cent had found it necessary to retrain employees after maternity leave. Thirty-two per cent had problems finding temporary replacements.

In only two per cent of cases had employers granted more than 52 weeks for maternity leave; in fact, 87 per cent of medium-to-large establishments found that employees tended to take less than fifty-two weeks.

Just over half (54%) found that employees ask to change from full- to part-time work after maternity leave; 43 per cent have employees who wanted to work more flexible hours after leave, and just under a quarter had employees asking to change to different jobs after taking time off to have a child.

Benefits of maternity leave: Of these establishments, 26 per cent agreed that maternity leave enables them to recruit more often and 59 per cent believe it gives some workers opportunities for temporary promotion thus enabling staff to learn new skills. Two-thirds believe maternity leave enables them to retain skilled workers. Just under a third (30%) think maternity leave is more difficult to handle in some occupational categories than others, generally in the more skilled positions (see Table 30).

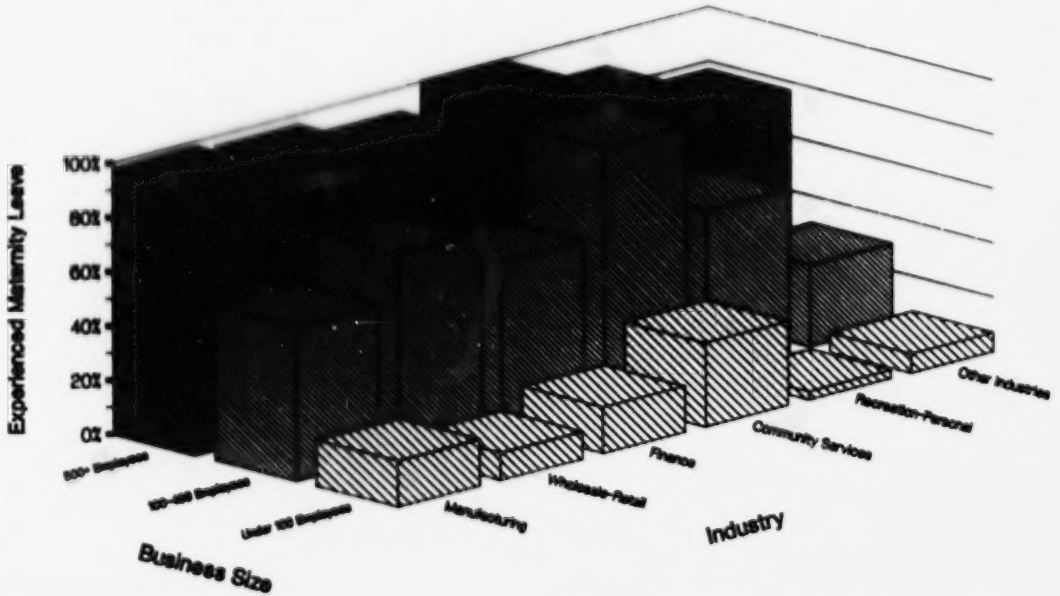
Dealing with maternity leave: the usual way maternity leave vacancies are covered is by making temporary appointments from outside (59 per cent of establishments); in 42 per cent of cases people are transferred from within the organization; 32 per cent made permanent replacements. In just under half the establishments, duties were changed around among existing staff to handle vacancies created by maternity leave. Overtime is rarely used to cover maternity leave absences (3 per cent, see Table 29).

Fourteen per cent of establishments acknowledged changing their employment patterns as a result of maternity leave provisions. Among those who say they changed employment patterns, 36 per cent stated they used more casual workers, 10 per cent employed fewer women in the childbearing years.

It would be interesting to know the extent to which women who take maternity leave and return to the workforce, return to part-time and/or casual positions as the move to more flexible and shorter working hours was a trend noted in the employee survey.

Figure 12 :
Experience of Maternity Leave

by Business Size and Industry



Comments from establishments on this issue of recruitment are couched in more sophisticated language but tend to amount to the same thing as those made by smaller establishments:

> 'Tend to employ women who already have family.'
>
> 'More careful assessment of staff's personal objectives, and better career planning than before for prospective managers and supervisors who are female. Without some indication from staff of their intentions a large amount of money and time can be wasted on training the non-career minded. This applies to males also.'
>
> 'This is only a consideration in positions which require training, for example, graduates who take up positions requiring several years specific on-the-job training. Our experience is that all female staff in this area have left permanently when pregnant, despite the career prospects of the position.'

In Large Establishments (500+ Employees)

It is very rare for large organizations not to have experienced maternity leave. Only seven per cent of organizations in this strata had not experienced maternity leave. This ties in with the findings of the employee survey, where size of organization was related to the taking of maternity leave; women employed by large organizations were far more likely to take maternity leave.

Maternity leave in 1985: Eighty-seven per cent of organizations experienced employees taking maternity leave; 71 per cent experienced employees returning from leave. Sixty-one per cent experienced maternity leave takers resigning without returning to work. Twelve per cent experienced employees resigning within two months of returning to work and 17 per cent had employees resigning within six months of returning to work.

In larger organizations there appears to be far more likelihood of employees resigning without returning to work, due in part perhaps to the more impersonal nature of larger organizations. In small organizations there may be a feeling of letting colleagues down. The fact that women were often very sympathetic to the 'burden' maternity leave may place on small businesses seems to support this notion. However, because of their size, large organizations do experience more maternity leave, and therefore are more likely to experience women failing to complete their contract with their employer.

In eighty-six per cent of organizations women resigned because of pregnancy without taking or requesting maternity leave.

Problems with maternity leave: Most large employers experienced feeling uncertain about whether employees will return from maternity leave, and as shown earlier, this is a frequent occurrence in large businesses. Fifteen per

cent of large organizations have been involved in disputes over maternity leave. Eighty-seven per cent of large organizations have had to train replacements when employees were on maternity leave, 52 per cent stated they had to retrain employees returning from maternity leave. Forty-six per cent have had trouble replacing someone on maternity leave. Over half (56%) have experienced women taking maternity leave more than once. Ninety per cent of organizations found that employees tend to take less than 52 weeks; very few (3%) had employees who were granted more than 52 weeks leave.

Sixty-one per cent of large organizations had employees requesting to go from full- to part-time work after having children. This links in well with the findings in the employee data that women switch to part-time work after having children, and also prefer to work part time at this stage of their lives.

Just under half found that employees request more flexible working hours after they have children; 38 per cent stated that employees also asked to change to different jobs after taking maternity leave, and judging from the employee data, this was generally to ask for less responsible or demanding jobs.

Benefits of maternity leave: In terms of benefits of maternity leave, 63 per cent of large organizations believe maternity leave enables them to retain skilled workers, 32 per cent agree that maternity leave also enables them to recruit more often, and 58 per cent realize that maternity leave gives some workers opportunities for temporary promotions which enhances their job skills (see Table 30).

Dealing with maternity leave: A third of large organizations find that maternity leave is more difficult to handle in some occupational categories than others. Generally this has been in the more highly skilled positions. Although maternity leave might present some problems in skilled occupations, the employee data shows that the women most likely to be retained in employment after childbirth are those with more skilled occupations. Moreover, it is women with career options who tend to stay on in the workforce and combine child-rearing and workforce participation.

In handling maternity leave the most frequently used strategy was to make temporary appointments from outside the organization (77%); 65 per cent of organizations transferred someone from another section or position (see Table 29). In just over half the organizations changing duties around amongst existing staff was also a way of handling vacancies created by maternity leave.

A third of large organizations acknowledged that the introduction of maternity leave provisions had changed their employment patterns. Fifty-one per cent of those who acknowledged this, stated that they tend to use more casual employees. Ten per cent stated that they employ fewer women in the childbearing years.

Comments from large employers suggest they are noting changes in the retention rate of women after maternity leave:

> 'Instead of women resigning to have children, they are returning to the workforce and we are retaining valuable expertise.'
>
> 'Fewer women in the childbearing age group are resigning; this of course could be due to the demographic trend of delaying childbearing and having fewer or no children.
>
> Heads of departments request for staff to be older, and prefer to have staff past childbearing age. Requests have not stopped Personnel from recruiting staff of all ages.'

13

VIEWS OF PRIVATE EMPLOYERS ON THE WORKING OF MATERNITY LEAVE

Employers were given the opportunity to voice concerns and views on the advantages and disadvantages of maternity leave, and to make suggestions about specific changes they would like to see in existing maternity leave provisions. Seventeen per cent of employers surveyed gave their opinions.

Advantages For Employers

The main advantage of maternity leave for employers is summarized in this comment:

> 'It does provide the opportunity to retain experienced people that would otherwise be lost. However, we have not yet decided whether this really outweighs all the hassles that maternity leave causes.' (Manufacturer, 100–499 employees)

Generally, this is the only advantage that employers see in maternity leave, when they look at the provisions from their own perspective. In line with equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programmes, large enterprises and small establishments which are part of larger enterprises acknowledged the benefits to women that maternity leave offers:

> 'In line with our EEO policy and programme, this organization makes maternity leave and adoption leave available to all women employed at all levels. This prevents women being disadvantaged because of child bearing and it assists the company in retaining valuable employees.'
>
> 'Maternity leave has proved valuable in retaining women in the workforce particularly qualified/skilled workers. Further legislation, i.e. greater award provisions covering permanent part-time arrangements, when coupled with maternity leave provisions, would greatly diminish the number of skilled workers who are leaving the workforce to take up home duties.'

> 'Maternity leave provisions are indeed advantageous to the Australian workforce. It enables women to strive for the development of their full potential without motherhood meaning the 'be all and end all' decision that has to be made in preference to a career. This in turn enables employers to maintain skilled and qualified staff without the cost of retraining and redeveloping.'
>
> 'The scope for the employment market is also broadened because employing women within childbearing years (18–35 years) no longer equals a short term appointment.'
>
> 'I would suggest that first, the lack of payment while on maternity leave and second, the high cost of child minding facilities, be addressed. Women should not be financially disadvantaged for playing such an important social role and nor should the horrendous cost of child minding force women from the workforce.' (Finance (100–499 employees)

Some smaller businesses expressed the same views but without the rhetoric and with an added pragmatism:

> 'I see only advantages. People have the opportunity to come back to work. I think it is well planned. The employers don't suffer because if the worker is good they get her back. If she's bad, they fire her anyway.'

A large retail chain acknowledged that maternity leave is widely used in their organization, but employees tend not to return to their previous position but switch to part-time or casual work. This is seen as a benefit to the employer as it provides a well-trained, experienced supply of workers who are known to be reliable.

> 'Encourages skilled labour to return to our industry; provides incentive for women to return to work after the child is born. Yet frequently women return to a position of lesser authority. Predominantly in retail area, takers of maternity leave choose to return in a part-time capacity. This being a reasonably difficult category of employee to find, we see maternity leave as an advantages.'

Most employers see maternity leave as having no benefits for them, but only benefits for employees. However, one large manufacturer suggested that while maternity leave provided no problems for large organizations, it did present problems for small organizations. It was suggested that:

> 'The Maternity Leave Act is an advantage for females working in large establishments but it must be a disadvantage to females applying for jobs with small employers who avoid employing females of childbearing age because of the employer's inability to cope with maternity leave; it does cost employers money to recruit casual or temporary labour and training is costly.'

Disadvantages For Employers

When it came to disadvantages, employers were far more vocal. They had no problem itemizing the disadvantages they experience with maternity leave provisions.

One large employer (100–499 employees) believed maternity leave to be:

> 'The most discriminatory legislation ever enacted and it should be repealed immediately. This company's attitude is to replace females leaving its employ with male employees — eventually there will be no females employed by this company as all employees will be males who can perform the tasks of receptionist, typists, clerks, computer operators that were previously almost exclusively occupied by females.'

However, it must be stated that while employers for the most part could see no advantages for themselves in maternity leave but only disadvantages, there were few responses which expressed the degree of hostility shown above.

Disadvantages to employers are the increased costs of training and recruiting replacements, and administering maternity leave. One large employer outlined this in some detail with estimated costs:

> 'Most women do not return from maternity leave, and few of those that do, remain beyond the first year. Most maternity leave is taken by unskilled employees, minimizing any benefits flowing from the return to the workforce of trained workers. By far the biggest disadvantage is the administration of the leave. Each application is estimated to require approximately four hours administration time spread over the time from application to return or non-return to work, and in our organizations, involving eight people or sections. This does not include any time devoted to obtaining replacements.'

Maternity leave is seen as a disadvantage to small business in particular. This view is expressed mainly by small establishments but also by larger enterprises. Respondents in the employee survey also often expressed concern for small businesses. This is perhaps best summed up by one large employer:

> 'Being a large company we are able to cope with absences due to maternity leave. There is, however, a lot of reorganization needed to cover these absences. Perhaps the most difficult factor to handle is the uncertainty as to whether an employee will return to work or not. Although no employee actually resigned during the period specified in your questionnaire, this did happen in previous years, and I feel sure it will this year. In some situations, e.g. process work, it is no problem, but in other situations where more senior employees performing 'one off' jobs are on leave, it is difficult to cover their function for a period of maternity leave. Training for some positions takes many months and in other circumstances people who are suitable are not prepared to take on short-term assignments. How these difficulties can be overcome I do not know, as a requirement for any firm commitment of intention to return to work on a specified date could not be enforced.'

In relation to the problems associated with recruiting suitable staff to cover absences created by maternity leave, one large employer noted:

> 'Training of replacements for staff on maternity leave is costly and temporary staff usually have to be on the job prior to the employee starting leave and again when the employee returns as there is a hand over period.'

One of the main concerns expressed is about the treatment of replacement staff, not just the problem of finding replacement staff and having to offer them temporary positions, but the problem that an employee on maternity leave may return from maternity leave early. Another concern was having to dismiss a good worker when the employee on leave returns, in some instances a worker who is seen as better than the person on maternity leave.

There was general concern expressed by some employers not specifically relating to maternity leave but to the economy generally, to unemployment and other industrial issues such as the 17.5 per cent holiday leave loading. Presumably they were commenting on maternity leave as an additional cost to them in difficult economic times.

General Comments on Maternity Leave Provisions

When asked for comments on the working of maternity leave, the large majority of small-to-medium size establishments, and particularly very small businesses (0–4, 5–19 employee) had neither knowledge nor experience of maternity leave, so felt unable to make suggestions for changes to the provision. Comments tended to be statements like:

> 'Don't really know too much about the maternity leave position. It has never really concerned me. Vague idea about it only.'
>
> 'Never given any thought to it.'
>
> 'Unable to comment as I am unaware of these provisions.'
>
> 'Have not been affected therefore of no real consequence.'

One restaurant owner stated:

> 'Turnover is so great that they are not here long enough to qualify.'

There were many negative comments about maternity leave with suggestions that it should be abolished. These generally came from small businessmen who had no experience of maternity leave but nevertheless had strong opinions about it:

> 'No, it shouldn't be there. Just another handout. Husbands should support families.'
>
> 'Like to see it cut out. Mothers should be at home full time while they have young children. Too many are dumping their responsibilities on others.'
>
> 'Don't believe in it. Very costly.'

'I'd like to see it scrapped. I'm not in favour. I don't think it's necessary. It puts a lot of people out of work suddenly when the person who took maternity leave decides to come back and sometimes the person who took the maternity leave comes back and then leaves again in three weeks. It's just my personal opinion — I'm totally against it.'

'I don't go along with it at all. It is discriminatory to start with and the country can't afford all these bits and pieces.'

This linking of maternity leave with other 'bits and pieces' such as 17.5 per cent holiday leave loading, penalty rates, or 'discrimination legislation', may be part of the reason for the negative responses from many businesses. Also there were often many statements about the state of the economy and the expounding of 'traditional family values'. As one small food retailer expressed it:

'I reckon it's the greatest lurk going. Women having kids should stay at home. I've got five kids, and my wife's at home looking after them. Women who don't stay at home and look after kids when they're infants aren't mothers in my book. They're just working housewives. Years ago kids used to be able to get a job in Woolworths. Not any more. I'm not biased against them. Some of them have to work because of the social situation. That's the whole thing. The unions have got it, so what can you do. Fortunately I don't employ any women.'

Also, maternity leave seems linked in people's minds with unemployment, particularly youth unemployment.

'I want their complete elimination. These provisions threaten employment security prospects for unemployed single females denying them their entitlement to work for a period of years before marriage.'

It appears that many of the negative reactions to maternity leave are not based on experience of maternity leave, but the personal values of the respondent.

One frequent complaint was about the expense of maternity leave through 'paying' employees when they are not working. Paid maternity leave is a rare occurrence in the private sector. Employers who talked of abolishing paid leave or about its burdens had not experienced maternity leave and indeed had not granted any paid maternity leave in their organizations. This kind of response suggests there is widespread ignorance and misunderstanding of existing maternity leave provisions.

There were often more informed comments on the differences in benefits available in the public and private sector which highlighted the injustice of variable provisions. In particular, there were negative comments on the maternity leave benefits available to teachers and the disruption to children's lives resulting from teachers on extended maternity leave. As one respondent put it:

'There are a number of women getting six weeks paid maternity leave. Why? I support "holding the place", but not the rip-off that seems frequent in Teaching/Public Service.'

Suggestions and comments were not all negative. Many small businessmen agree in principle with maternity leave, even though they have not experienced it in their organization. This acceptance is often accompanied by unease about the implications and the greater burden maternity leave could impose on a small business compared to a large private sector organization or the public sector.

Often employers believed their informal arrangements were all that were necessary. One large manufacturer stated that women return when they are ready, and often 'lend' the job to a sister, cousin or friend. A small businessman stated that he did not see a real necessity: his secretary could always come back because she was such a good worker. As one employer expressed it:

> 'Let common sense and decency prevail. No need for legislation in private enterprise. Public sector is socialized anyhow.'

The voluntary or informal arrangements that operate in the private sector in smaller enterprises was evident in the employee survey data, where seventeen per cent of women who had not formally taken maternity leave returned to their old employer after taking leave. Often these women resigned with an option to return later. However, return is dependent on whether the employer has a position, or the employee was seen as a 'good worker'.

While there is not clear evidence in this survey, the large majority of women change from full- to part-time work after the birth of a child. One research question which needs to be addressed in the future is whether or not women return to permanent part-time positions or only to casual jobs which will not entitle them to maternity leave in subsequent pregnancies. There were several suggestions by employers or personnel managers to include casual workers in maternity leave provisions:

> 'Can't really think of any changes. Twelve months seems long enough. Should be given to casuals too, as many of our casuals have been here a long time.'

and one retailer suggested:

> 'Allow the person to nominate a change of work classification prior to taking leave — such as either casual or part-time.'

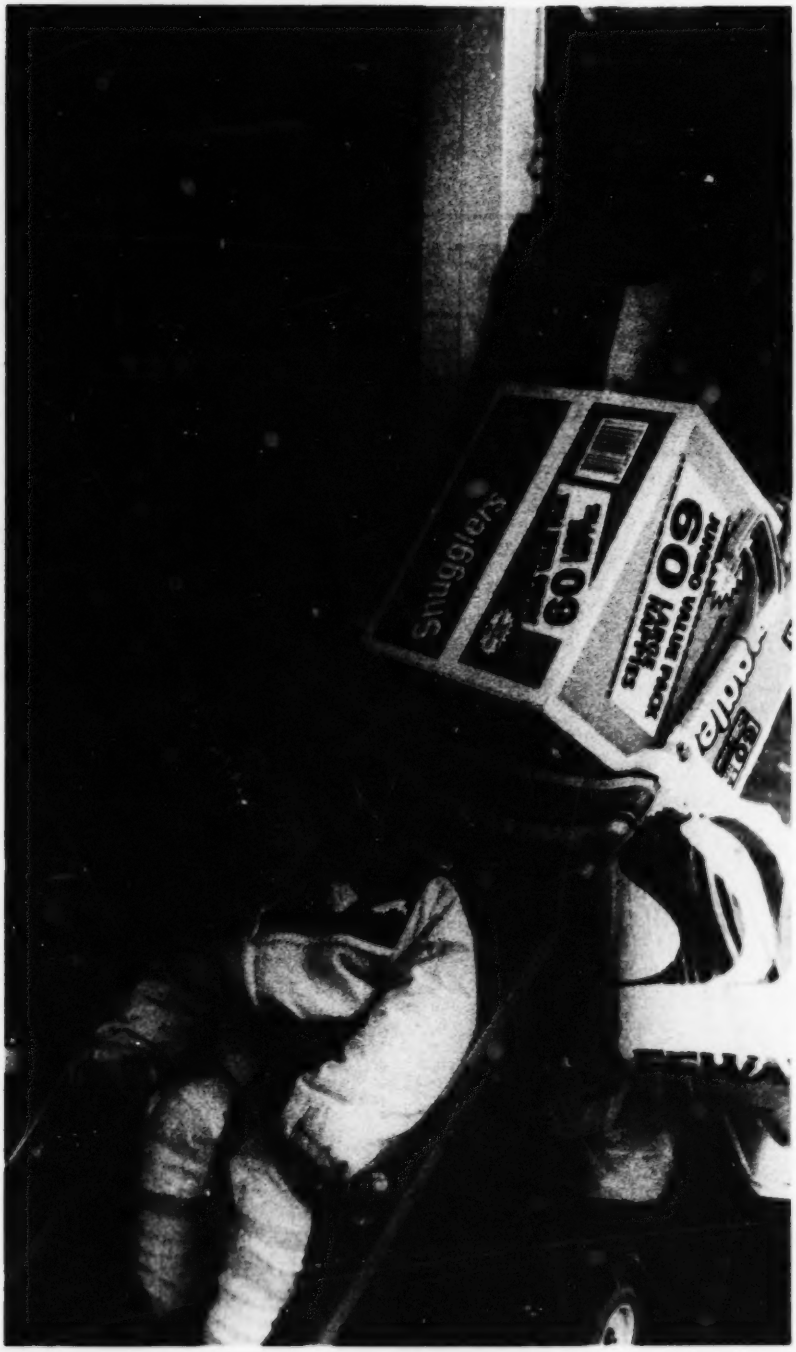
While these comments give a flavour of the attitudes of private sector employers to maternity leave, there were many specific problems identified by employers and changes they would like to see in maternity leave provisions. Those who have experienced maternity leave referred to several major problems with the existing provisions. These problems tend to be very similar to the issues which were raised in the employee questionnaire (see Appendix 2) and have already been reported in this book: the problem of finding a replacement, the right of reinstatement, the uncertainty about knowing when and if a women will return. The major issue here seems to

be when an employee will return, and how unfair this is to a replacement. As employers put it:

> 'Some more flexibility is required in the placement of persons after they return from maternity leave. Sometimes the replacement person is far better at a particular job than the person on maternity leave. It is counter-productive to put this person off or to try to transfer them to another department (if possible).'
>
> 'Absolute rubbish! You train someone else while someone is on leave and then get rid of them. The people should have to give you six months' notice — not just one month before they are ready to resume work; then a position for them should be allocated.'
>
> 'Introduction of longer period of maternity leave to enable replacement staff to be trained and work for a longer time. Employers should not have to re-employ a person after maternity leave in the same position. If maternity leave is retained, it should apply to all workers not just award personnel.'
>
> 'First, 52 weeks is too long to hold a job for a person; second, it is costly to train people for temporary positions. Third, few people will take temporary work and fourthly, it is not safe to have women working in factories close to confinement.'
>
> 'Exclude employers of less than say 10 females from the provisions of the Act. While most small employers would willingly take back their well-trained employees after an absence for maternity purposes, it is difficult to obtain a replacement on a temporary basis.'
>
> 'Don't know what it is. When you explain it, it sounds fair to me. I feel company or government should subsidize them while on leave.'

PART THREE

EMPLOYER SURVEY — THE PUBLIC SECTOR


Snuggles
60 Nappies
60 Nappies

14

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYER SURVEY

In the employee survey, maternity leave in the public and private sectors was contrasted. Information was gained on maternity leave take-up and retention rates, and the data demonstrated high use of maternity leave in the public sector compared to the private sector.

In looking at maternity leave from the employer perspective, the main emphasis of the analysis has been on the private sector with only limited resources expended on data collection from the public sector.

Daniel (1981), who conducted similar research on employers in Great Britain, decided it was inappropriate to include public sector and private sector establishments in the same systematic survey of employers. Daniel carried out separate inquiries among public and private sector employers and he used different methods for each group. This was the approach taken in this study also.

Survey Process

In order to obtain information on the operation of maternity leave in the public sector from employers' point of view a two-part strategy was used:

1. Establishment-based survey of public sector employers

The same employer questionnaire used in the private sector employers' study was sent to fifty-six public sector establishments. The sample selected from each State included: government schools, public hospitals, transport authorities, electricity authorities, local government authorities and one bank.

2. Brief review of maternity leave in the public sector

Letters requesting information on maternity leave were sent to the Australian Public Service Board and the Public Service Boards or the equivalent departments in each State. Also letters requesting information on maternity

leave among teachers were sent to State education departments. In addition, a large federal statutory authority was contacted. These bodies were asked to provide any available information, data analysis or reviews of maternity leave which they may have conducted in recent years. They were also asked to provide much of the same information which was requested from private sector employers concerning number of male and female employees, the numbers who commenced maternity leave in a given time period, numbers of those who returned, and any difficulties they may have experienced with maternity leave.

In conducting both the employee and the private sector employer surveys, respondents were guaranteed confidentiality. The same is the case here except for the Australian Public Service whose research on maternity leave is used extensively in this section (Pryor 1986).

Response Rate

The response rate to the survey of public sector establishments was 63 per cent. Establishments with the lowest response rate were transport authorities and hospitals (See Table 37).

All but three establishments had had experience of staff taking maternity leave (in other words, 91 per cent of the public sector establishments). This level of experience is far greater than in the private sector and is consistent with the employee survey findings.

Table 37: Response rate in the public sector survey of establishments

Establishments	*Number in Sample*	*Number of Responses*
Government Schools	12	7
Public Hospitals	14	8(a)
Transport Authorities	6	1
Electricity Authorities	6	4
Local Government Authorities	17	13
Bank	1	1(b)
TOTAL	56	35

Notes: (a) 1 combined return
(b) This reply was an interview rather than completion of questionnaire

15

REVIEW OF MATERNITY LEAVE OPERATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The information collected about maternity leave at the enterprise group level varies in its quantity and quality so comparisons are difficult. Broad issues only are discussed about maternity leave and how it operates in the public sectors throughout Australia.

Some very detailed information was obtained on the operation of maternity leave from both federal and State government sources. However, in some States as yet there appears no centralized, systematic data collection and evaluation of maternity leave that is publicly available. This situation is regrettable because maternity leave conditions in the public sector vary considerably and if evaluation of these programs was publicly available it would provide valuable information for other employers when and if changes to maternity leave provisions were considered. However, as discussed earlier, there are methodological problems in studying maternity leave and it is realised that maternity leave is not a major issue for employers, as demonstrated by the two employer studies reported in this book.

Take-up of Maternity Leave

In 1986, The Australian Public Service conducted research into the decline in the number of women taking maternity leave despite an increase in the number of women employed in the service (Pryor 1986).

Pryor suggests that three factors need to be taken into consideration when interpreting this decline. These factors relate to:

- demographic changes in specific birth rates which indicate that there is an increase in the age at first birth among women;
- the declining birth rate among women currently employed in the Australian labour force; and
- the changing age distribution of women officers in the Australian Public Service. There has been a shift in the number of women officers towards older age groups.

His research shows that women are more likely to take maternity leave after a long period in the service, commonly from five to fifteen years. This finding is consistent with the employee survey data on public sector women, and with demographic trends.

At a given time point in 1985 in the Australian Public Service approximately 2140 employees were on maternity leave. Excluding casuals and temporaries, this is 1.2 per cent of the total workforce and 3 per cent of the female workforce. In evaluating and discussing maternity leave, it is more useful to speak of maternity leave rates as a percentage of the total workforce, as this gives better indication of the impact of maternity leave on a particular enterprise. It also seems less discriminatory.

One of the largest federal statutory authorities provided us with detailed statistics of their maternity leave use and other long-term leave figures which give some indication of the impact of maternity leave on an enterprise in relation to other long-term leave. In this particular statutory authority, only 16 per cent of all long-term leave is maternity leave. At any given time during 1985, 3.4 per cent of the total workforce was on long-term leave and, of this, only 0.54 per cent was maternity leave.

Public Sector Experience of Maternity Leave

This section describes the experience of maternity leave in the thirty-four public sector establishments which were surveyed.

Dealing with Maternity Leave: When dealing with maternity leave, 27 of these establishments made temporary replacements and only five had ever taken on permanent replacements. Nineteen of the establishments transferred someone from another section; in 13 cases, duties were changed around among existing staff; overtime was rarely used to cover for maternity leave.

Problems with Maternity Leave: When looking at the problems created by absence through maternity leave, 27 establishments experienced uncertainty about whether or not an employee would return from maternity leave, 25 had to train replacements and 12 experienced having to retrain someone after return from maternity leave. Twenty-four stated that they had experienced employees taking less than 52 weeks maternity leave. Only five had ever granted more than 52 weeks: these tended to be in schools, where in several States this is an entitlement. One in four experienced disputes over maternity leave: this is considerably higher than employers in the private sector where maternity leave is a rarer occurrence. Twenty-two establishments experienced employees taking maternity leave more than once.

Twenty-one establishments found that in some cases employees wished to change from full- to part-time work after maternity leave, 15 had employees requesting more flexible working hours, and 8 had employees

asking to change to different positions.

A third of public sector establishments found that maternity leave is harder to cope with in some occupations than others.

Maternity Leave in 1985: Using the same technique of analysis as in the private sector employer survey, it was found that a high proportion of establishments had experience of maternity leave; twenty-eight establishments experienced employees taking leave in the twelve month period under investigation, 23 had employees returning from eave, 16 had employees resigning without returning to work, five experienced employees resigning within two months and seven within six months of returning.

Return to Work

Because of the diversity and few numbers in the sample of public sector establishments, maternity leave rates and retention rates were not calculated. However, information from responses to the survey indicates that retention rates in the public sector are generally between 50 and 75 per cent. There is evidence to suggest that retention rates are higher among establishments employing people with higher occupational status and salaries. However, the retention rates provided by the various public service boards and education departments tended to be lower than those found in the employee survey among public sector employees. This discrepancy on retention may partly be due to the fact that in the employee survey teachers and public hospital employees were classified as public sector employees even though they are not always so counted by public sector employers. Evidence from the employee survey shows that maternity leave is far more likely to be taken by higher occupational status employees, and that teachers and nurses are from occupational groups with the highest maternity leave usage and which also have high retention rates. It may also be that in the economic climate of the mid-eighties more women are tending to return to the labour force at least after the first pregnancy.

In 1979, the New South Wales public service introduced the option of part-time return at the discretion of departmental heads for maternity leave takers. Some evaluation of part-time maternity leave return has been made and the tentative conclusion reached is that retention rates after maternity leave marginally increase with the availability of part-time work.

Data from both the employee and employer surveys indicate that women often prefer to work part-time when they have young children. Returning part-time from maternity leave and extending the period to two years seems an ideal solution in that it keeps women attached to the labour force, helps both the employer and the women themselves retain skills, and at the same time allows women to combine childrearing and workforce participation.

However, there could perhaps be one problem with part-time return from maternity leave in the short term. In most instances, women go on to

have two children, and it is likely that when they return to the workforce after the first child it may not necessarily be for a substantial length of time. A survey conducted by the Office of Women's Affairs in Victoria in 1981 found that among multiple maternity leave takers the average length of time between the taking of maternity leave in the Victorian Public Service was 2.9 years. Therefore, it seems likely that many women returning from part-time maternity leave may leave again within relatively short periods due to second pregnancies. Because of this it is essential when evaluating retention rates after maternity leave that information is gathered on whether or not it is the first pregnancy. Also, it would be preferable for retention rates to be evaluated longitudinally over a five year period.

To give an example, one public sector employee who was part of the pilot survey resigned while on maternity leave but was back working within the public sector as an assistant librarian in a temporary position within twelve months. Since then she has had a second child and had leave without pay and returned to the same temporary position.

Information obtained from education departments suggests that providing additional unpaid leave (which can be up to seven years in Victoria) enables employers to retain teachers. One State which has recently extended unpaid leave after maternity leave expects teacher retention rates to increase from 40 to 80 per cent.

Maternity leave provisions are widely used in the public sector but reported retention rates after maternity leave vary between public sector employers. The decline in the percentage of female employees taking maternity leave noted by the Australian Public Service is likely also to be found in the other public sector bodies, as the implementation of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action legislation takes effect. The trend for women to remain in the workforce during the childbearing years or return in the post-childbearing years is likely to mean that in the public sector maternity leave rates will not increase because the age structure of the female labour force in the public sector will be broader, and as the report of this survey has demonstrated, maternity leave is a rare occurrence in the potential working life of women female employees.

REFERENCES

AUSTRALIAN Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Births Australia, 1984, Cat. No. 3301.0

The Labour Force, Australia, July 1986, Cat. No.6203.0.

The Labour Force, Australia, Historical Summary 1966 to 1986, 1987, Cat. No. 6204.0

Australian Yearbook, (1986), AGPS, Canberra.

BROWN, J., and SMALL, S. (1985), *Family Income Support Part 9: Maternity Benefits*, Policy Studies Institute, London.

CASS, B. (1986), *Income Support for Families with Children*, Social Security Review, Issues Paper No.1, Department of Social Security, Canberra.

Catalyst (1986), *Report on a National Study of Parental Leaves*, New York.

COHEN, J. and COHEN, P. (1975), *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioural Sciences*, Wiley & Sons, New York.

DANIEL, W.W. (1980), *Maternity Rights: the Experience of Women*, Policy Studies Institute, London.

DANIEL, W.W. (1981), *Maternity Rights: the Experience of Employers*, Policy Studies Institute, London.

FUNDER, K. (1986), 'Work and the Marriage Partnership', in McDONALD, P. ed., *Settling Up: Property and Income Distribution on Divorce in Australia*, Prentice Hall of Australia, Sydney, pp.65–99

GLEZER, H. (1984), 'Changes in marriage and sex-role attitudes among young married women: 1971–1981', *Family Formation, Structure and Values, Proceedings*, Vol.1, Australian Family Research Conference, November 1983, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

GREENSTEIN, T. (1986), 'Social-psychological factors in perinatal labour force participation', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, August, Vol.48, pp.565–571.

ILO (1986), *Maternity Benefits in the Eighties: an ILO Global Survey (1964–84)*, ILO, Geneva.

JOSHI, H. (1984), 'Women's participation in paid work: further analyses of women and employment survey, *Monograph No.45*, Department of Employment, HMSO, London

KAMERMAN, S. (1980), *Maternity and Parental Benefits and Leaves: An International Review*', Impact on Policy Series Monograph No.1, New York

KAMERMAN, S. and KAHN, A.J. (1981), *Child Care, Family Benefits, and Working Parents: A Study in Comparative Policy*, Columbia University Press, New York

KAMERMAN, S., KAHN, A.J. and KINGSTON, P. (1983), *Maternity Policies and Working Women*, Columbia University Press, New York.

McLAUGHLIN, S. (1982), 'Differential patterns of female labour force participation surrounding the first birth', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol.44, pp.407–420.

MOTT, F.L. and SHAPIRO, D. (1983), 'Complementarity of work and fertility among young American mothers', *Population Studies*, Vol.37, pp.239–252.

PUBLIC Service Board of New South Wales (1981), Extract from Report to the Premier under s109 of the Public Service Act, 'Maternity leave: an introductory report', New South Wales.

PRYOR, J. (1986), *Women on Maternity Leave*, Planning and Statistical Services Section, Australian Public Service Board, Canberra.

RAYMOND, J. (1987), *Bringing up Children Alone: Policies for Sole Parents*, Social Security Review, Issues Paper No.3, Department of Social Security, Canberra.

VICTORIA. Office of Women's Affairs. (1981), Report on Parenting Leave, Flexible Work Patterns, Child Care Arrangements from the Interdepartmental Committee on Equal Opportunity, Victorian Public Service, unpublished mimeo.

WAITE, L., HAGGSTROM, G., and KANOUSE, D. (1985), 'Changes in the employment activities of new parents', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.50, pp.263–272.

WOLCOTT, I. (1987), *Workers with Family Responsibilities: Implications for Employers*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Discussion Paper No.14, Melbourne.

WOMEN'S Bureau (DEIR) (1985), *Maternity and Parental Leave*, Information Paper No.3, AGPS, Canberra.

WULFF, M. (1987), 'Full-time, part-time, or not right now?' *Family Matters: AIFS Newsletter*, No. 19, October, pp14-18.

APPENDIX 1

ATTITUDE SCALES USED IN THE SURVEY OF MATERNITY LEAVE IN AUSTRALIA

Work Family Values Scale

9 Item Factor-Based Scale **Alpha Reliability .79**

Items

- Whatever career a woman may have her most important role in life is that of becoming a mother.
- Wives who don't have to work should not do so.
- A wife should give up her job whenever it inconveniences her husband and children.
- There should be more day care centres and nursery schools so that more young mothers could work.
- If a child gets sick and both parents are working, the man should be just as willing as the wife to stay home from work and take care of the child.
- If his wife works, a man should share equally in household chores such as cooking, cleaning and washing.
- If his wife works, a man should share equally in the responsibilities of child care.
- A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.
- A pre-school child is likely to suffer if the mother works.

Mother/Wife Role versus Working Scale

3 Item Factor-Based Scale **Alpha Reliability .71**

Items

- Whatever career a woman may have her most important role in life is that of becoming a mother.
- Wives who don't have to work should not do so.
- A wife should give up her job whenever it inconveniences her husband and children.

Mothering versus Child Care Scale

3 Item Factor-Based Scale **Alpha Reliability .76**

Items

- A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.
- A pre-school child is likely to suffer if the mother works.
- There should be more day care centres and nursery schools so that more young mothers could work.

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRES

Institute of Family Studies

WREIP Maternity Leave Study 1985

The Institute of Family Studies, established under the provisions of the Family Law Act 1975, commenced operation in February 1980. The Institute functions as a statutory authority of the Australian Government, from which it derives its financial support. The founding Director is Dr Don Edgar. The Institute has a Board of Management of seven appointed members and a permanent staff of professional and support personnel. In addition, specialist assistants and consultants in appropriate fields are engaged to assist the Institute in its work when necessary.

Functions of the Institute

The functions of the Institute, as defined by the Family Law Act 1975, are:

- to promote, by the conduct, encouragement and co-ordination of research and other appropriate means, the identification of, and development of understanding of, the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia, with the object of promoting the protection of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit in society, and
- to advise and assist the Attorney-General in relation to the making of grants, out of moneys available under appropriations made by the Parliament, for purposes related to the functions of the Institute and the supervising of the employment of grants so made.

The Institute's activities centre around meeting the following needs:

- research on social and economic factors affecting the well-being of families of different types in Australian society;
- development of an objective understanding of what is happening to the family in Australia, including identification of the strengths, as well as problems, of Australian families;
- dissemination of information about families and family structures to all those whose work directly affects the lives of families;
- monitoring and reporting on the impact of government policies and administrative practices on families of various types in Australia; and
- evaluation of the effects of marriage counselling, pre-marital education and other services, including those areas of the law aimed at assisting families.

Thus the objects of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on Australian families.

MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity leave is time allowed off work by your employer for you to have your baby. It may begin before and continue after your child's birth for a total of up to 52 weeks. It means you need not lose your job because you are having a baby.

Most women employees in Australia are covered by maternity leave when they are expecting a baby. This leave may comprise both paid and unpaid periods of leave.

In some States maternity leave is referred to as accouchement leave.

Maternity Leave Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire. We are interested in your answers whether or not you have had maternity leave.

Most questions only need a tick in the answer box. Numbers alongside boxes are only for processing purposes.

Please mail back your reply as soon as possible in the reply paid envelope. If you would like to have some advice or assistance in filling out the form or want any information about the survey please phone Helen Glezer (03) 342 9125 or Sandra Marsden (03) 342 9157. If you wish, please reverse charges.

Institute of Family Studies
766 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone (03) 342 9100

1. What is your date of birth?

day ..... month ..... year .....

2. In which State or Territory do you live?

- Australian Capital Territory ☐ 1
- New South Wales ☐ 2
- Northern Territory ☐ 3
- Queensland ☐ 4
- South Australia ☐ 5
- Tasmania ☐ 6
- Victoria ☐ 7
- Western Australia ☐ 8

3. Do you live in:

- A Capital City (ie Canberra, Sydney, Darwin, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth) ☐ 1
- Newcastle, Wollongong, Gold Coast, Geelong, Townsville, Brisbane Water, Launceston, Toowoomba, Ballarat, Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Rockhampton, Cairns ☐ 2
- Elsewhere ☐ 3

4. In which country were you born?

- Australia ☐ 1
- United Kingdom/Ireland ☐ 2
- New Zealand ☐ 3
- Italy ☐ 4
- Lebanon ☐ 5
- Yugoslavia ☐ 6
- Greece ☐ 7
- Vietnam ☐ 8
- Philippines ☐ 9
- Germany ☐ 10
- Netherlands ☐ 11
- Pacific Islands ☐ 12
- Other ☐ 13

please specify

.....

☐☐

Answer this question if you were born overseas

5. In what year did you first move to Australia?

Year 19 .....

6. How old were you when you left school?

Age left school ..... years

7. What was the highest class you completed at school?

- If your education was not in Australia please tick the qualification which best describes the training you received

- Primary schooling ☐ 1
- Year 7, form 1 ☐ 2
- Year 8, form 2 ☐ 3
- Year 9, form 3 ☐ 4
- Year 10, form 4 ☐ 5
- Year 11, form 5 ☐ 6
- Year 12, form 6 (HSC) ☐ 7

8. Do you hold a post-school qualification? If so, which of these groups best describes your highest post-school qualification?

- If your education was not in Australia please tick the qualification which best describes the training you received

- No post-school qualification ☐ 0
- Trade/Apprenticeship ☐ 1
- Certificate from business college, TAFE Certificate, etc ☐ 2
- Diploma (tertiary, beyond Year 12) ☐ 3
- Bachelor Degree ☐ 4
- Post Grad Diploma/Higher Degree ☐ 5
- Other ☐ 6

please specify

.....

☐☐

9. How many babies have you had?

- Do not include miscarriages, still-births, adoptions or stepchildren

Number of children .....

2

Answer this question if you have had more than one child

10. What are the dates of birth of:

Your eldest child day ....month.....year.....

Your youngest child day ....month.....year.....

11. Since leaving school how many years have you spent being

unemployed Years .....

employed Years .....

in full time education Years .....

12. In this time how many jobs have you had which lasted more than two weeks?

Number of jobs .....

13. Last week did you have a full-time or part-time job of any kind?

Yes, worked for payment or profit ☐ 1

Yes, but absent on holidays, on sick leave, on paid maternity leave, on strike or temporarily stood down ☐ 2

Yes, unpaid work in family business ☐ 3

Yes, other unpaid work ☐ 4

No I was studying ☐ 5

No I did not have a job ☐ 6

If you ticked box 1 or 2 in Question 13 answer questions 14 to 18 then go to Question 20

14. In the main job you held last week were you

a wage or salary earner? ☐ 1

conducting your own business but not employing others? ☐ 2

conducting your own business and employing others? ☐ 3

15. In this job what is your occupation?

- Give full title.
- For example, Single Certificate Nurse, Accounts Clerk, Clothing Machine Operator
- Armed Services personnel – state rank as well as occupation

.....

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

3

16. What are the main tasks or duties that you usually perform in that occupation?

- Describe as fully as possible
- For example, recording and paying accounts, cooking hamburgers

.....

17. What kind of industry, business or service is carried out where you work?

- Describe as fully as possible, using two words or more (for example, footwear manufacturer)

.....

☐☐☐☐

18. Are you employed by:

Private company or non-government organization ☐ 1

Federal government – Australian Public Service ☐ 2

Federal government – Statutory Authority or enterprise (include TAA, Telecom, Australia Post, Qantas, ABC, etc) ☐ 3

State/territory government (include government schools, public hospitals etc) ☐ 4

Local government (include council creches, municipal libraries, recreation centres etc) ☐ 5

Don't know ☐ 6

19. What child care arrangements do you have for the child born in May 1984 while you are working?

- Mark all arrangements used if you use more than one form of child care

Child looked after by:

partner ☐ 1

another relative ☐ 1

a friend ☐ 1

family day care ☐ 1

paid babysitter ☐ 1

work-based child care ☐ 1

community child care ☐ 1

private creche ☐ 1

other ☐ 1

please specify

.....

☐☐

20. Do you pay money for child care?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2

[If you ticked box 1 answer questions as in Questions 21-23]

21. How much does child care cost you per week?

Dollars per week .....

22. How many children does this amount cover?

Number of children .....

23. What is the *gross income* (including pensions and/or allowances) that *YOU usually receive* each week from all sources? (*not* including your partner's income)

- Count all income including family allowance (child endowment); maintenance; pensions; unemployment benefits etc; workers' compensation; superannuation; wages; salary; overtime; dividends; rents received; business or farm income (less expenses of operation); interest received
- Do not deduct tax, superannuation, health insurance, etc.

No income ☐ 1
$1 to $38 per week ($1 to $2000 per year) ☐ 2
$39 to $76 per week ($2001 to $4000 per year) ☐ 3
$77 to $115 per week ($4001 to $6000 per year) ☐ 4
$116 to $172 per week ($6001 to $9000 per year) ☐ 5
$173 to $230 per week ($9000 to $12000 per year) ☐ 6
$231 to $287 per week ($12001 to $15000 per year) ☐ 7
$288 to $345 per week ($15001 to $18000 per year) ☐ 8
$346 to $422 per week ($18001 to $22000 per year) ☐ 9
$423 to $498 per week ($22001 to $26000 per year) ☐ 10
$499 to $613 per week ($26001 to $32000 per year) ☐ 11
$614 to $766 per week ($32000 to $40000 per year) ☐ 12
$767 to $958 per week ($40001 to $50000 per year) ☐ 13
Over $958 per week (Over $50000 per year) ☐ 14

24. Are you in receipt of any of the following benefits?

- Tick any that apply to you

None of these ☐ 1
Age Pension ☐ 1
Invalid Pension ☐ 1
Widow's Pension ☐ 1
Supporting Parent's Benefit ☐ 1
Unemployment Benefit ☐ 1
Sickness Benefit ☐ 1
Special Benefit ☐ 1
Carer's Allowance ☐ 1
War Widow's Pension ☐ 1
War Service/Disability/Repatriation Pension ☐ 1
TEAS ☐ 1
Worker's Compensation ☐ 1

25. What is your present marital status?

Married ☐ 1
Living together as a couple but not married ☐ 2
Separated ☐ 3
Divorced ☐ 4
Widowed ☐ 5
Never Married ☐ 6

[If you answered 1 or 2 in Question 25 continue, otherwise go to Question 28]

26. What is your partner's employment status?

Works full-time ☐ 1
Works part-time ☐ 1
Is a student ☐ 1
Is unemployed ☐ 1
Is retired or receives a pension ☐ 1

4

27. What is the *gross income* (including pensions and/or allowances) that *your partner usually receives each week* from all sources?

- Count all income including family allowance (child endowment); maintenance; pensions; unemployment benefits etc; workers' compensation; superannuation; wages; salary; overtime; dividends; rents received; business or farm income (less expenses of operation); interest received
- Do not deduct tax, superannuation, health insurance, etc.

No income	1
$1 to $38 per week ($1 to $2000 per year)	2
$39 to $76 per week ($2001 to $4000 per year)	3
$77 to $115 per week ($4001 to $6000 per year)	4
$116 to $172 per week ($6001 to $9000 per year)	5
$173 to $230 per week ($9001 to $12000 per year)	6
$231 to $287 per week ($12001 to $15000 per year)	7
$288 to $345 per week ($15001 to $18000 per year)	8
$346 to $422 per week ($18001 to $22000 per year)	9
$423 to $498 per week ($22001 to $26000 per year)	10
$499 to $613 per week ($26001 to $32000 per year)	11
$614 to $768 per week ($32001 to $40000 per year)	12
$767 to $959 per week ($40001 to $50000 per year)	13
Over $959 per week (Over $50000 per year)	14

28. Where were you living in May, 1984?

Australian Capital Territory	1
New South Wales	2
Northern Territory	3
Queensland	4
South Australia	5
Tasmania	6
Victoria	7
Western Australia	8
Overseas	9

If you ticked box 9 in Question 28 go to Question 75

29. In this study we are particularly concerned with your work experience during your pregnancy in 1983/84 and whether you worked for an employer and were eligible for maternity leave

Were you working at any time during this pregnancy in 1983/84?

Yes, worked for an employer	1
Yes, was self-employed or employed others	2
Yes, unpaid work in a family business	3
Yes, other unpaid work	4
No, I was studying	5
No, I did not have a job	6

If you ticked box 1, 2, 3 or 4 in Question 29

30. In the main job you held at the time you were pregnant in 1983/84 what was your occupation?

- Give full title
- For example, Single Certificate Nurse, Accounts Clerk, Clothing Machine Operator
- Armed Services personnel – state rank as well as occupation

31. What were the main tasks or duties that you usually performed in that occupation?

- Describe as fully as possible
- For example, recording and paying accounts, cooking hamburgers

32. What kind of industry, business or service was carried out by the employer you worked for?

- Describe as fully as possible, using two words or more (for example, footwear manufacturer)

33. Were you employed by

Private company or non-government organization	1
Federal government – Australian Public Service	2
Federal government – Statutory Authority or enterprise (include TAA, Telecom, Australia Post, Qantas, ABC, etc)	3
State/territory government (include government schools, public hospitals etc)	4
Local government (include council creches, municipal libraries, recreation centres etc)	5
Don't know	9

5

34. When did you start working for this employer?

- If you had more than one period of employment with this employer, please give the time at which you *last* commenced work before the birth of this child

Commenced work in month ..... year .....

36. About how many employees were working at the place where you worked when you stopped work just before you had your baby?

1 – 19 ☐ 1
20 – 49 ☐ 2
50 – 99 ☐ 3
100 – 499 ☐ 4
500 + ☐ 5
Don't know ☐ 9

35. About what proportion of the employees were women?

Less than a quarter ☐ 1
About a quarter ☐ 2
Between a quarter and a half ☐ 3
About a half ☐ 4
Between a half and three-quarters ☐ 5
About three-quarters ☐ 6
All or almost all ☐ 7
Don't know ☐ 9

37. Were you a member of a trade union or association?

No ☐ 1
Yes ☐ 2
please specify which union

.....

☐☐

38. Do you know what award you were employed under?

Not employed under an award ☐ 1
Don't know ☐ 2
Yes ☐ 3
name of award

.....

☐☐

If you ticked box 3 in Question 38 continue, otherwise go to Question 40

39. Do you know if this award contains a provision for maternity leave?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2

40. What was the gross income (including pensions and/or allowances) that you usually received each week from all sources when you were pregnant in 1983/84? (Not including your partner's income)

- Count all income including family allowance (child endowment); maintenance; pensions; unemployment benefits etc; workers' compensation; superannuation; wages; salary; overtime; dividends; rents received; business or farm income (less expenses of operation); interest received
- Do not deduct tax, superannuation, health insurance, etc

No income ☐ 1
$1 to $38 per week ☐ 2
($1 to $2000 per year)
$39 to $76 per week ☐ 3
($2001 to $4000 per year)
$77 to $115 per week ☐ 4
($4001 to $6000 per year)
$116 to $172 per week ☐ 5
($6001 to $9000 per year)
$173 to $230 per week ☐ 6
($9001 to $12000 per year)
$231 to $287 per week ☐ 7
($12001 to $15000 per year)
$288 to $345 per week ☐ 8
($15001 to $18000 per year)
$346 to $422 per week ☐ 9
($18001 to $22000 per year)
$423 to $498 per week ☐ 10
($22001 to $26000 per year)
$499 to $613 per week ☐ 11
($26001 to $32000 per year)
$614 to $786 per week ☐ 12
($32001 to $40000 per year)
$787 to $958 per week ☐ 13
($40001 to $50000 per year)
Over $958 per week ☐ 14
(Over $50000 per year)

6

41. What was the gross income (including pensions and/or allowances) that *your partner* usually received each week from all sources at the time you were pregnant in 1983/84?

- Count all income including family allowance (child endowment); maintenance; pensions; unemployment benefits etc, workers' compensation; superannuation; wages; salary; overtime; dividends; rents received; business or farm income (less expenses of operation); interest received
- Do not deduct tax, superannuation, health insurance, etc

Not partnered when pregnant in 1983/84 ☐ 0
No income ☐ 1
$1 to $38 per week ($1 to $2000 per year) ☐ 2
$39 to $76 per week ($2001 to $4000 per year) ☐ 3
$77 to $115 per week ($4001 to $6000 per year) ☐ 4
$116 to $172 per week ($6001 to $9000 per year) ☐ 5
$173 to $230 per week ($9001 to $12000 per year) ☐ 6
$231 to $287 per week ($12001 to $15000 per year) ☐ 7
$288 to $345 per week ($15001 to $18000 per year) ☐ 8
$346 to $422 per week ($18001 to $22000 per year) ☐ 9
$423 to $498 per week ($22001 to $26000 per year) ☐ 10
$499 to $613 per week ($26001 to $32000 per year) ☐ 11
$614 to $768 per week ($32001 to $40000 per year) ☐ 12
$767 to $958 per week ($40001 to $50000 per year) ☐ 13
Over $958 per week (Over $50000 per year) ☐ 14

42. Was your employer helpful in any of the following ways during your pregnancy?

- Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case. Leave blank if none of these situations applied

Employer gave me lighter duties ☐ 1
Employer allowed me more flexible hours ☐ 1
Employer allowed me to fit in ante-natal visits during work hours ☐ 1
Other help ☐ 1
please describe help
.....
☐☐

43. Did you experience any of the following situations during your pregnancy?

- Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case. Leave blank if none of these situations applied

Employer asked me to leave ☐ 1
Employer gave me different duties which I did not want ☐ 1
I requested different duties but employer would not allow me to change duties ☐ 1
Employer wanted me to start maternity leave earlier or later than I wished ☐ 1
Could not get time off for doctor's appointments or ante-natal visits during working hours ☐ 1
Other problem ☐ 1
please describe problem
.....
☐☐

44. About how many hours a week, on average, were you working at your main job for most of your pregnancy?

Number of hours worked .....

45. Did you work shift work during your pregnancy?

Yes, all the time ☐ 1
Yes, some of the time ☐ 2
No ☐ 3

46. Were you working for the same employer continuously in a permanent (not casual) job for at least twelve months before leaving work to have your baby?

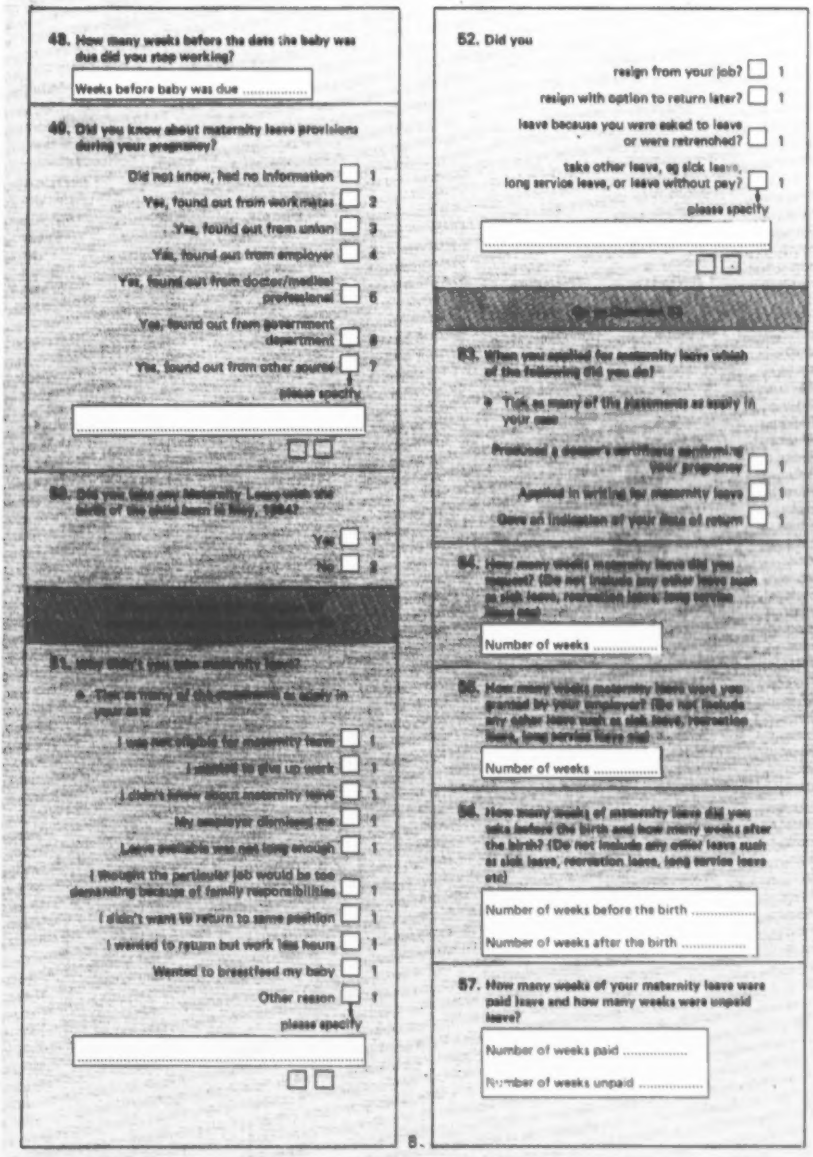
Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2

47. What were the main sources of household income just after the birth of your child in May, 1984?

- Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case

My salary ☐ 1
Partner's salary ☐ 1
Special Benefit/Supporting Parents' Benefit ☐ 1
Partner's social security benefits ☐ 1
Other source ☐ 1
please specify
.....
☐☐

7



48. How many weeks before the date the baby was due did you stop working?

Weeks before baby was due .....

49. Did you know about maternity leave provisions during your pregnancy?

- Did not know, had no information ☐ 1
- Yes, found out from workmates ☐ 2
- Yes, found out from union ☐ 3
- Yes, found out from employer ☐ 4
- Yes, found out from doctor/medical professional ☐ 6
- Yes, found out from government department ☐ 8
- Yes, found out from other source ☐ 7

please specify

.....

☐☐

50. Did you take any Maternity Leave with the birth of the child born in May, 1984?

- Yes ☐ 1
- No ☐ 2

51. Why didn't you take maternity leave?

a. Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case

- I was not eligible for maternity leave ☐ 1
- I wanted to give up work ☐ 1
- I didn't know about maternity leave ☐ 1
- My employer dismissed me ☐ 1
- Leave available was not long enough ☐ 1
- I thought the particular job would be too demanding because of family responsibilities ☐ 1
- I didn't want to return to same position ☐ 1
- I wanted to return but work less hours ☐ 1
- Wanted to breastfeed my baby ☐ 1
- Other reason ☐ 1

please specify

.....

☐☐

52. Did you

- resign from your job? ☐ 1
- resign with option to return later? ☐ 1
- leave because you were asked to leave or were retrenched? ☐ 1
- take other leave, eg sick leave, long service leave, or leave without pay? ☐ 1

please specify

.....

☐☐

53. When you applied for maternity leave which of the following did you do?

a. Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case

- Produced a doctor's certificate confirming your pregnancy ☐ 1
- Applied in writing for maternity leave ☐ 1
- Gave an indication of your date of return ☐ 1

54. How many weeks maternity leave did you request? (Do not include any other leave such as sick leave, recreation leave, long service leave etc)

Number of weeks .....

55. How many weeks maternity leave were you granted by your employer? (Do not include any other leave such as sick leave, recreation leave, long service leave etc)

Number of weeks .....

56. How many weeks of maternity leave did you take before the birth and how many weeks after the birth? (Do not include any other leave such as sick leave, recreation leave, long service leave etc)

Number of weeks before the birth .....

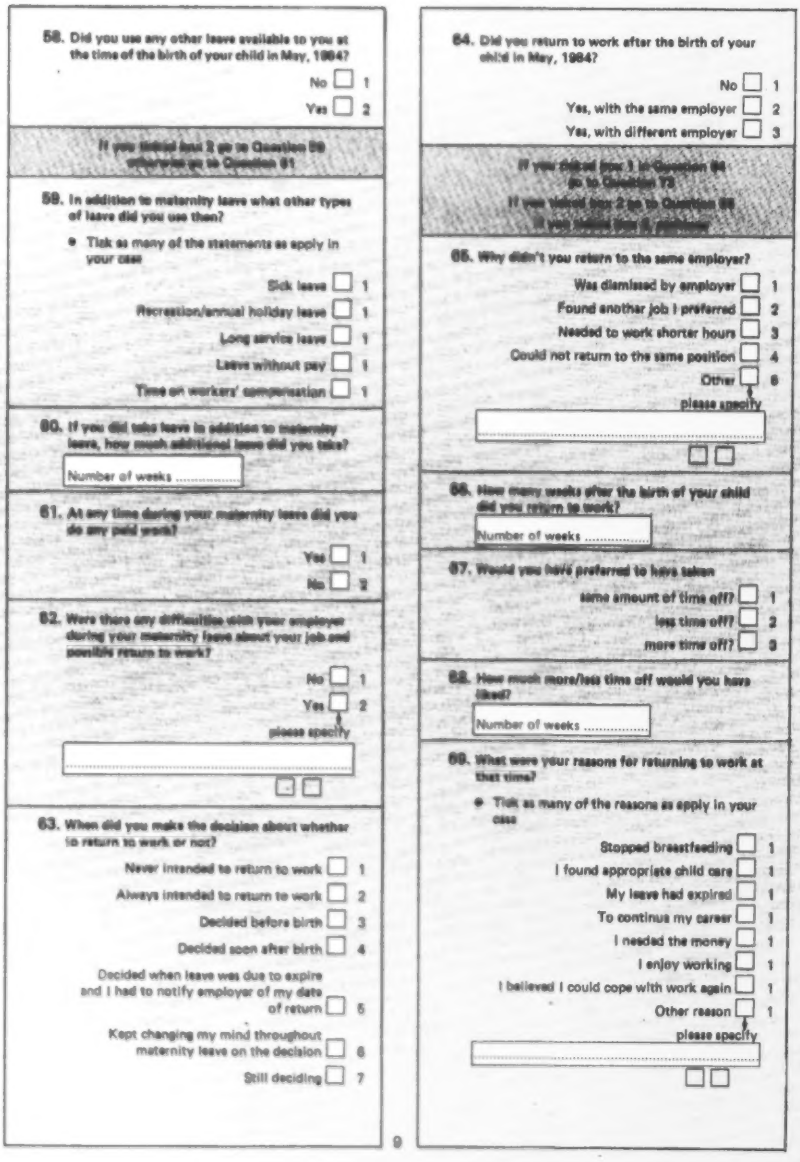
Number of weeks after the birth .....

57. How many weeks of your maternity leave were paid leave and how many weeks were unpaid leave?

Number of weeks paid .....

Number of weeks unpaid .....

8.



58. Did you use any other leave available to you at the time of the birth of your child in May, 1984?

No ☐ 1
Yes ☐ 2

If you ticked box 2 go to Question 59 otherwise go to Question 61

59. In addition to maternity leave what other types of leave did you use then?

• Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case

Sick leave ☐ 1
Recreation/annual holiday leave ☐ 1
Long service leave ☐ 1
Leave without pay ☐ 1
Time on workers' compensation ☐ 1

60. If you did take leave in addition to maternity leave, how much additional leave did you take?

Number of weeks .....

61. At any time during your maternity leave did you do any paid work?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2

62. Were there any difficulties with your employer during your maternity leave about your job and possible return to work?

No ☐ 1
Yes ☐ 2
please specify
.....
☐☐

63. When did you make the decision about whether to return to work or not?

Never intended to return to work ☐ 1
Always intended to return to work ☐ 2
Decided before birth ☐ 3
Decided soon after birth ☐ 4
Decided when leave was due to expire and I had to notify employer of my date of return ☐ 5
Kept changing my mind throughout maternity leave on the decision ☐ 6
Still deciding ☐ 7

64. Did you return to work after the birth of your child in May, 1984?

No ☐ 1
Yes, with the same employer ☐ 2
Yes, with different employer ☐ 3

If you ticked box 1 in Question 64 go to Question 73
If you ticked box 2 go to Question 66
If you ticked box 3 go to Question 66

65. Why didn't you return to the same employer?

Was dismissed by employer ☐ 1
Found another job I preferred ☐ 2
Needed to work shorter hours ☐ 3
Could not return to the same position ☐ 4
Other ☐ 5
please specify
.....
☐☐

66. How many weeks after the birth of your child did you return to work?

Number of weeks .....

67. Would you have preferred to have taken

same amount of time off? ☐ 1
less time off? ☐ 2
more time off? ☐ 3

68. How much more/less time off would you have liked?

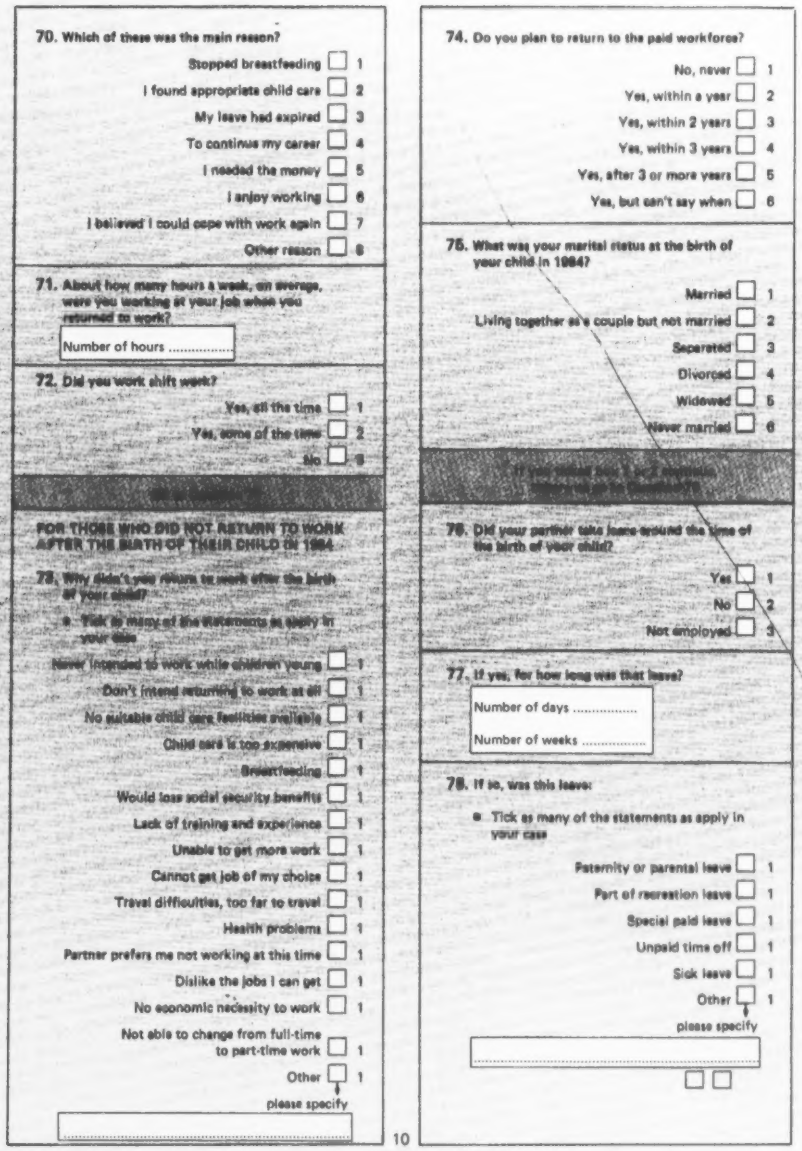
Number of weeks .....

69. What were your reasons for returning to work at that time?

• Tick as many of the reasons as apply in your case

Stopped breastfeeding ☐ 1
I found appropriate child care ☐ 1
My leave had expired ☐ 1
To continue my career ☐ 1
I needed the money ☐ 1
I enjoy working ☐ 1
I believed I could cope with work again ☐ 1
Other reason ☐ 1
please specify
.....
☐☐

9



70. Which of these was the main reason?

- Stopped breastfeeding ☐ 1
- I found appropriate child care ☐ 2
- My leave had expired ☐ 3
- To continue my career ☐ 4
- I needed the money ☐ 5
- I enjoy working ☐ 6
- I believed I could cope with work again ☐ 7
- Other reason ☐ 8

71. About how many hours a week, on average, were you working at your job when you returned to work?

Number of hours .....

72. Did you work shift work?

- Yes, all the time ☐ 1
- Yes, some of the time ☐ 2
- No ☐ 3

FOR THOSE WHO DID NOT RETURN TO WORK AFTER THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILD IN 1984

73. Why didn't you return to work after the birth of your child?

- Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case

- Never intended to work while children young ☐ 1
- Don't intend returning to work at all ☐ 1
- No suitable child care facilities available ☐ 1
- Child care is too expensive ☐ 1
- Breastfeeding ☐ 1
- Would lose social security benefits ☐ 1
- Lack of training and experience ☐ 1
- Unable to get more work ☐ 1
- Cannot get job of my choice ☐ 1
- Travel difficulties, too far to travel ☐ 1
- Health problems ☐ 1
- Partner prefers me not working at this time ☐ 1
- Dislike the jobs I can get ☐ 1
- No economic necessity to work ☐ 1
- Not able to change from full-time to part-time work ☐ 1
- Other ☐ 1

please specify

.....

10

74. Do you plan to return to the paid workforce?

- No, never ☐ 1
- Yes, within a year ☐ 2
- Yes, within 2 years ☐ 3
- Yes, within 3 years ☐ 4
- Yes, after 3 or more years ☐ 5
- Yes, but can't say when ☐ 6

75. What was your marital status at the birth of your child in 1984?

- Married ☐ 1
- Living together as a couple but not married ☐ 2
- Separated ☐ 3
- Divorced ☐ 4
- Widowed ☐ 5
- Never married ☐ 6

76. Did your partner take leave around the time of the birth of your child?

- Yes ☐ 1
- No ☐ 2
- Not employed ☐ 3

77. If yes, for how long was that leave?

Number of days .....

Number of weeks .....

78. If so, was this leave:

- Tick as many of the statements as apply in your case

- Paternity or parental leave ☐ 1
- Part of recreation leave ☐ 1
- Special paid leave ☐ 1
- Unpaid time off ☐ 1
- Sick leave ☐ 1
- Other ☐ 1

please specify

.....

☐☐

79. How many times have you had maternity leave?

Number of times had maternity leave .....

80. Are there any special circumstances that relate to your pregnancy in 1983-84 and work status that you think would be of interest to this study? (eg premature birth, health problems during pregnancy, employer went out of business, you shifted interstate)

.....

.....

.....

82. Do you have any suggestions or observations regarding maternity leave from the point of view of an employee?

.....

.....

.....

IFS WORK AND FAMILY VALUES QUESTIONS

The Institute of Family Studies is interested in the work and family values of Australian women. Please indicate your attitude to the statements and questions below

If you were given a choice, which of the following working arrangements would you most prefer to have now?

Full-time employment ☐ 1
Part-time employment ☐ 2
Not working ☐ 3

Whatever career a woman may have her most important role in life is that of becoming a mother

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

Wives who don't have to work should not do so

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

A wife should give up her job whenever it inconveniences her husband and children

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

There should be more day care centres and nursery schools so that more young mothers could work

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

11

If a child gets sick and both parents are working, the man should be just as willing as his wife to stay home from work and take care of the child

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

If his wife works, a man should share equally in household chores such as cooking, cleaning and washing

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

If his wife works, a man should share equally in the responsibilities of child care

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work

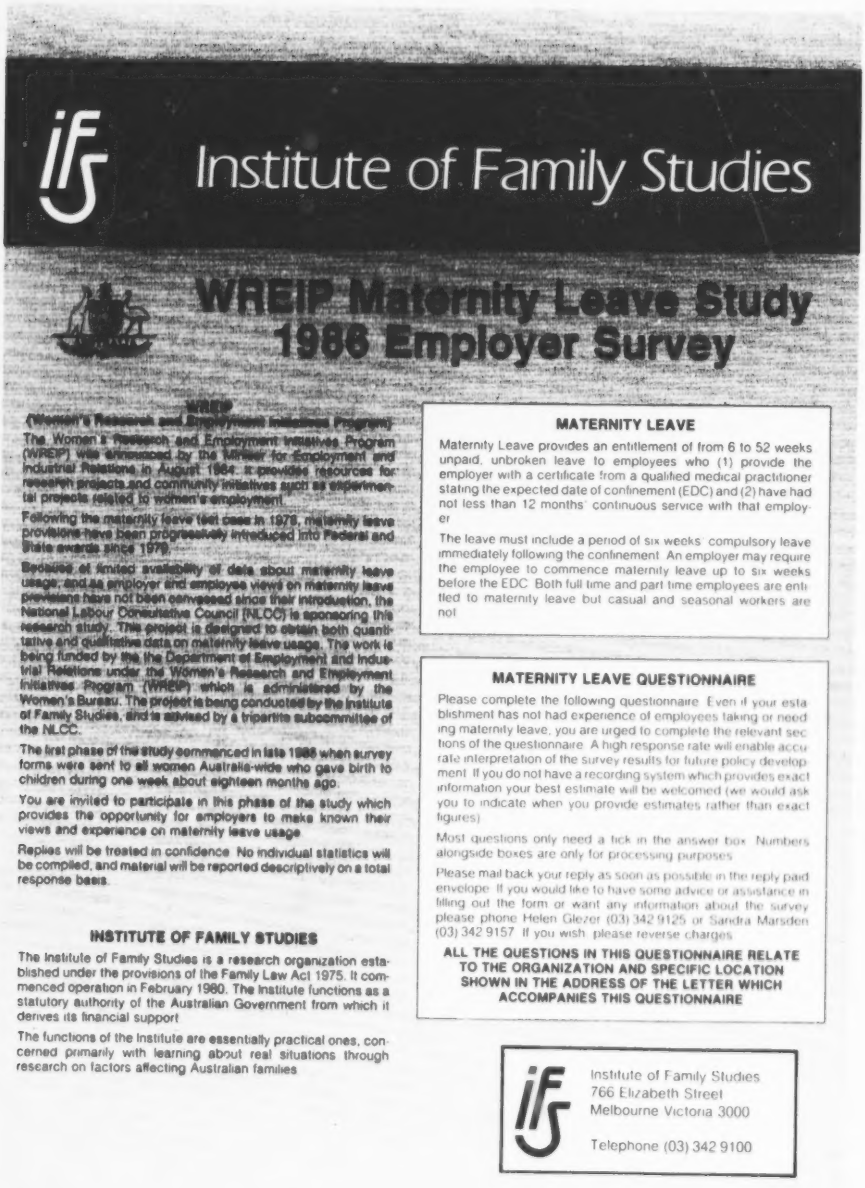
Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

A preschool child is likely to suffer if the mother works

Strongly agree ☐ 1
Agree ☐ 2
Not sure ☐ 3
Disagree ☐ 4
Strongly disagree ☐ 5

12

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please mail back as soon as possible in the reply paid envelope.



Institute of Family Studies

WREIP Maternity Leave Study 1986 Employer Survey

WREIP
(Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program)

The Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program (WREIP) was announced by the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations in August 1984. It provides resources for research projects and community initiatives such as experimental projects related to women's employment.

Following the maternity leave test case in 1978, maternity leave provisions have been progressively introduced into Federal and State awards since 1979.

Because of limited availability of data about maternity leave usage, and as employer and employee views on maternity leave provisions have not been canvassed since their introduction, the National Labour Consultative Council (NLCC) is sponsoring this research study. This project is designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data on maternity leave usage. The work is being funded by the the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations under the Women's Research and Employment Initiatives Program (WREIP) which is administered by the Women's Bureau. The project is being conducted by the Institute of Family Studies, and is advised by a tripartite subcommittee of the NLCC.

The first phase of the study commenced in late 1986 when survey forms were sent to all women Australia-wide who gave birth to children during one week about eighteen months ago.

You are invited to participate in this phase of the study which provides the opportunity for employers to make known their views and experience on maternity leave usage.

Replies will be treated in confidence. No individual statistics will be compiled, and material will be reported descriptively on a total response basis.

INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES

The Institute of Family Studies is a research organization established under the provisions of the Family Law Act 1975. It commenced operation in February 1980. The Institute functions as a statutory authority of the Australian Government from which it derives its financial support.

The functions of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on factors affecting Australian families.

MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity Leave provides an entitlement of from 6 to 52 weeks unpaid, unbroken leave to employees who (1) provide the employer with a certificate from a qualified medical practitioner stating the expected date of confinement (EDC) and (2) have had not less than 12 months' continuous service with that employer.

The leave must include a period of six weeks' compulsory leave immediately following the confinement. An employer may require the employee to commence maternity leave up to six weeks before the EDC. Both full time and part time employees are entitled to maternity leave but casual and seasonal workers are not.

MATERNITY LEAVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the following questionnaire. Even if your establishment has not had experience of employees taking or needing maternity leave, you are urged to complete the relevant sections of the questionnaire. A high response rate will enable accurate interpretation of the survey results for future policy development. If you do not have a recording system which provides exact information your best estimate will be welcomed (we would ask you to indicate when you provide estimates rather than exact figures).

Most questions only need a tick in the answer box. Numbers alongside boxes are only for processing purposes.

Please mail back your reply as soon as possible in the reply paid envelope. If you would like to have some advice or assistance in filling out the form or want any information about the survey please phone Helen Glezer (03) 342 9125 or Sandra Marsden (03) 342 9157. If you wish please reverse charges.

ALL THE QUESTIONS IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE RELATE TO THE ORGANIZATION AND SPECIFIC LOCATION SHOWN IN THE ADDRESS OF THE LETTER WHICH ACCOMPANIES THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Institute of Family Studies
766 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone (03) 342 9100

1. How many employees were employed by this establishment in the last pay period in February 1986?

(Note: Please count all employees including
- permanent, temporary and casual employees
- managerial and executive employees
- employees absent on pre-paid leave)

Total number of employees ☐

2. How many of these employees are:

A Males employed full-time? ☐
B Males employed part-time? ☐
C Males employed on casual or temporary basis? ☐
D Females employed full-time? ☐
E Females employed part-time? ☐
F Females employed on casual or temporary basis? ☐

(Note:
- *Full-time* employees are those who normally work the agreed or award hours for a full-time employee in their occupation. If in doubt, employees should be regarded as full-time if they ordinarily work 35 hours or more a week.
- *Part time* employees work less than full-time hours per week and receive pro-rata entitlements to sick leave and annual leave and may work one or two days a week.
- *Temporary* employees have a fixed time limit appointment.
- *Casual* employees may work full-time or part time hours but do not receive pro rata entitlement to annual leave or sick leave and receive a loading in their hourly rate of pay.)

If this establishment had female employees (in D, E or F), continue to Question 3.
If this establishment had no female employees (all in D, E and F), go to Question 10.

2

Please complete the following question in as much detail as possible

3. How many female employees did you have in each of the following occupational categories in the last pay period in February 1986?
- Definitions of employment classifications are on the back page of the questionnaire

Occupational Category	*Number of Female Employees*
Managers and Administrators	☐
Professionals	☐
Para-professionals	☐
Tradespersons	☐
Clerks	☐
Salespersons and Personal Service Workers	☐
Plant and Machine Operators and Drivers	☐
Labourers and Related Workers	☐
Other	☐
TOTAL	

4. Are any of the female employees of this establishment covered by an award, determination or industrial agreement?

Yes, *all* female employees are covered by awards, determinations or industrial agreements ☐ 1
Yes, *some* female employees are covered by awards, determinations or industrial agreements ☐ 2
No, female employees are not covered by awards, determinations or industrial agreements ☐ 3

If no females are covered by awards, determinations or industrial agreements (i.e. box 3 ticked), go to Question 8.
If females are covered by awards, determinations or industrial agreements (i.e. box 1 or 2 ticked), continue to Question 5.

5. Do these awards, determinations or industrial agreements include maternity leave provisions?

All females work under awards with maternity leave provisions ☐ 1
All females work under awards without maternity leave provisions ☐ 2
Some females work under awards with maternity leave provisions and others without maternity leave provisions ☐ 3

6. Has any employee in your establishment ever requested and/or taken maternity leave?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2

If you answered yes, continue to Question 7
If you answered no go to Question 16

7. How does this establishment handle requests for maternity leave from employees *not covered by awards with maternity leave provisions:*

A Leave is allowed on the same basis as the award provisions

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know ☐ 8
Not applicable ☐ 9

B Leave is allowed on a different basis from the award provisions

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know ☐ 8
Not applicable ☐ 9

C Employee resigns but can apply for re-employment and will be given preference when a position arises

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know ☐ 8
Not applicable ☐ 9

D Employee resigns

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know ☐ 4
Not applicable ☐ 8

E Other ☐ 9

please specify

8. How many employees commenced any maternity leave in the year January 1, 1985 to December 31 1985?

Number commenced ☐ None ☐

9. How many employees returned from taking maternity leave in the year January 1985 to December 31 1985?

Number returned ☐ None ☐

10. During 1985, how many employees who had been on maternity leave resigned?

A without returning to work? ☐
B within two months of returning to work? ☐
C within six months of returning to work? ☐

11. To your knowledge in recent years has your establishment experienced employees who were eligible for maternity leave resigning because of pregnancy *without* requesting/taking maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

12. In recent years has your establishment experienced any of the following situations with regard to maternity leave?

A Difficulty finding a temporary replacement while an employee is on maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

B Uncertainty about whether an employee will return from maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

3

C Having an employee failing to return after stating her intention to return from maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

D Being involved in disputes and complaints over maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

E Granting an employee more than fifty-two weeks' maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

F Having to train replacement employees while an employee is on maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

G Having to retrain an employee after maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

H Finding that the same employees have taken maternity leave more than once?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

I Employees asking to change to part-time work after maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

4

J Employees requesting more flexible working hours after maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

K Employees asking to change to a different kind of job after maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

L Do you find employees tend to take less than fifty two weeks maternity leave?

Never ☐ 1
Occasionally ☐ 2
Often ☐ 3
Don't know/Not sure ☐ 8

13. Do you find that:

Maternity leave enables you to retain skilled workers?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2
Don't know ☐ 8

Maternity leave enables you to recruit more frequently?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2
Don't know ☐ 8

Maternity leave gives some other workers opportunities for temporary promotion so that they learn additional skills?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2
Don't know ☐ 8

14. Is maternity leave more difficult to deal with in some particular occupational categories compared to others within your establishment?

No ☐ 1
Yes ☐ 2

please specify occupational categories and why they present difficulties
As in Question 3, definitions of occupational categories are on the back page of the questionnaire

15. How does this establishment cover vacancies which arise through maternity leave?

- Tick all methods used

We make temporary appointments from outside ☐ 1
We take on permanent replacements from outside ☐ 1
We transfer someone from another branch or section ☐ 1
We cover with overtime ☐ 1
We change duties around among existing staff ☐ 1
Nothing specific/leave position open ☐ 1
Other ☐ 1

please specify

16. Has the availability of maternity leave changed the employment patterns of this establishment?

Not at all ☐ 1
A little ☐ 2
A lot ☐ 3

If you ticked box 1 in Question 16 go to Question 18

17. How have employment patterns changed?

- Tick all appropriate boxes

A Employing fewer women in childbearing years ☐ 1
B Using more casual positions ☐ 1
C Other changes ☐ 1

Please explain

18. Are there any specific changes that you would like to see in the maternity leave provisions?

5

10. Are there any comments you would like to make on the possible/actual advantages and disadvantages of maternity leave?

THANK YOU

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES

1 MANAGERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

11 Legislators and government appointed officials
12 General managers
13 Specialist managers
14 Farmers and farm managers
15 Managing supervisors (sales and service)
16 Managing supervisors (other business)

2 PROFESSIONALS

21 Natural scientists
22 Building professionals and engineers
23 Health diagnosis and treatment practitioners
24 School teachers
25 Other teachers and instructors
26 Social professionals
27 Business professionals
28 Artists and related professionals
29 Miscellaneous professionals

3 PARA-PROFESSIONALS

31 Medical and science technical officers and technicians
32 Engineering and building associates and technicians
33 Air and sea transport technical workers
34 Registered nurses
35 Police
39 Miscellaneous para-professionals

4 TRADESPERSONS

41 Metal fitting and machining tradespersons
42 Other metal tradespersons
43 Electrical and electronics tradespersons
44 Building tradespersons
45 Printing tradespersons
46 Vehicle tradespersons
47 Food tradespersons
48 Amenity horticultural tradespersons
49 Miscellaneous tradespersons

5 CLERKS

51 Stenographers and typists
52 Data processing and business machine operators
53 Numerical clerks
54 Filing, sorting and copying clerks
55 Material recording and despatching clerks
56 Receptionists, telephonists and messengers
59 Miscellaneous clerks

6 SALESPERSONS AND PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS

61 Investment, insurance and real estate salespersons
62 Sales representatives
63 Sales assistants
64 Tellers, cashiers and ticket salespersons
65 Miscellaneous salespersons
66 Personal service workers

7 PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATORS AND DRIVERS

71 Road and rail transport drivers
72 Mobile plant operators (except transport)
73 Stationary plant operators
74 Machine operators

8 LABOURERS AND RELATED WORKERS

81 Trades assistants and factory hands
82 Agricultural labourers and related workers
83 Cleaners
84 Construction and mining labourers
89 Miscellaneous labourers and related workers

Maternity Leave in Australia may help clarify the debate over maternity leave by providing first-hand information about the experience of over 2000 women who gave birth to a child in May 1984. The study gives information about these women's experiences and provides the best evidence to date of the workings of maternity leave in Australia. The book also details findings of a survey of employers' response to maternity leave in both the public and private sectors.

Forty-six per cent of the women surveyed were in employment during their pregnancy and of these, 44 per cent took maternity leave, 32 per cent, although eligible, did not take it, and the remaining 24 per cent were ineligible. Some common assumptions about the impact of maternity leave in Australia will be eroded by the facts presented here. The survey demonstrates that not only do women return to work in large numbers after childbirth, but that prior to giving birth they have been continuously employed with the same employer for an average of between five and seven years.

From the employer point-of-view, the study found that 78 per cent of all maternity leave is taken in the public sector, and only 21 per cent by the private sector. Of all private business organizations, only 35 per cent have ever experienced female employees taking maternity leave. For the others, maternity leave has no impact at all.

As the Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies says in his Foreword, maternity leave is not only a health issue, but one of social justice and equality. Maternity leave is also an industrial issue tied up with questions, for women, of dismissal, career continuity, job retention and promotion, and for employers, with questions about personnel and recruitment, and the training and retention of a skilled workforce. The book also raises serious questions about the nature of work and the kind of work arrangements that would enable all workers, both men and women, to better handle and productively manage their dual roles of parent and paid worker.

Australian Institute of Family Studies

300 Queen Street Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone (03) 608 6888 Fax (03) 600 0886

179